

ARNOLD GEULINCX
ETHICS

WITH SAMUEL BECKETT'S NOTES



Translated by

MARTIN WILSON

Edited by

HAN VAN RULER, ANTHONY UHLMANN
& MARTIN WILSON

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Arnold Geulincx
Ethics

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VOLUME 1

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ABBREVIATIONS

- AT *Œuvres de Descartes*, ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery, Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1897–1913/Paris: Vrin, 1964–1971/Paris: Vrin, 1996, followed by volume and page numbers.
- CSM *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, ed. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch and Anthony Kenny, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1985–1991, followed by volume and page numbers.
- Grynaeus Desiderius Erasmus et al., *Adagia, id est; Proverbiorum, Paroemiarum et Parabolarum omnium (. . .) Collectio*, ed. Johannes Jacobus Grynaeus, Frankfurt: Widow of Johannes Pressius, 1646.
- Opera* Arnold Geulincx, *Opera Philosophica*, ed. J.P.N. Land, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1891–1893/reprinted as Arnold Geulincx, *Sämtliche Schriften in fünf Bänden*, ed. H.J. de Vleeschauwer, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1965–1968, followed by volume and page numbers.
- Metaphysics* Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysics*, ed. Martin Wilson, Wisbech: Christoffel Press, 1999.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

During the course of this work, I was asked by an enquirer why the *Ethics* of Arnold Geulincx had never been translated into English; and I recall replying, somewhat mischievously, that perhaps all those who had attempted the task had given up in despair—despair, I added, at the obscurity of Geulincx' Latin and his contorted syntax. This explanation seemed at the time enough to satisfy anyone: it certainly satisfied *me*, having at one point become not a little discouraged myself. But now that these obscurities and contortions have all been illuminated and untwisted (and not by my efforts alone, far from it), I have come to see the work in a new light. A brief recollection of how I came to see it in the old light may make my reasons for this revision clearer.

In the Preface to my onetime translation of Geulincx' *Metaphysics*, I had remarked that:

... his [Geulincx'] rhetoric itself is not elegant. His habit of saying everything twice over (sometimes in the same sentence), and of repeating the same train of qualifications every time a certain word or phrase recurs is exasperating. Parts of the present work [*Metaphysics*] read like (what they may well have been) elaborated lecture-notes, producing a disjointed effect similar to Aristotle's work of the same title.

The *Ethics* I conceived of as being very different: a lyrical masterpiece, whose "magnificent Belgo-Latin" Samuel Beckett evidently found as captivating as he found its doctrines liberating—a lyrical masterpiece whose prose-poetry (I vowed) could be best conveyed by allowing my own prose to be infiltrated (however inadequately) by the rhythms and splendours of that era when the English language was at its best; which by no miraculous coincidence was approximately the period of Geulincx' own life. With this forewarning in mind, the reader may then not be as surprised as he might otherwise be to happen upon, when he has barely turned over a page or two, a passage such as this:

At the same time, the pleasure of a mind separated and withdrawing itself from the body (which, as I have said, consists in the bare appropriation of its own actions, inasmuch as they assent to Divine Law)

seems for the most part so meagre, so tenuous and rarefied, that men hardly or not at all consider it to be worthy of the name of Pleasure. And when this spiritual delight is sterile, and does not produce the corporeal and sensible pleasure (passionate Love) which in other cases it usually does produce, they complain that they have to live a life of sorrow and austerity, that they are wasting away, and that for all they obey God and Reason, they are destitute of all reward and consolation.

However, as the work progressed, I came to recognise that there is another essential element present that I had formerly been inclined to dismiss as an obstacle or even as a fault, an element that we can see in operation as early as in the Dedication that Geulincx addressed to the Curators of the University of Leiden. There has, no doubt, been flowerier, more contorted Latin (for instance, try the Dedication to the Grand Duke of Tuscany placed at the head of Galileo's *Starry Messenger*) than Geulincx' here, in that portion of the work in which extravagantly, even ridiculously flowery language was considered at the time to be *de rigueur*; but Geulincx does not disappoint:

For the roof of this temple is Ethics. And what of Politics? It is but an arch in this roof. Those for whom the welfare of a Commonwealth depends on something other than this virtuous firmament (I mean the roof of this temple) are a world away from the truth. He who has suspended the lantern of his counsels from human subtlety often glitters for a little while: the puerile admire him, and toadies flatter; but soon, snuffed out and guttering amidst smoke and stench, he crashes down onto the onlookers, showering them with his innards, and bruising their noddles. Experience, the dominatrix of fools, teaches it all too well with a spiky rod, today as of yore.

Yet even in such a passage, we observe something else going on: the syntax following the movement not of some periodic structure, but of his thought, trying, as it were to catch his thought in motion, as he is borne along by his avidness to explain himself to anyone who is listening, reaching for this, that, or any other metaphor that might elucidate rather than obscure his meaning (whatever his success or lack of it in particular cases), pausing to correct himself, in a word *talking* rather than writing (and I have everywhere punctuated the text accordingly). And this is the scene as I like to imagine it:

Through the high, narrow casements of an upper chamber, watery, autumnal sunlight slants down upon half-a-dozen men of student age, seated on wooden benches. Facing them in a creaking armchair sits an older (though not all that much older) man with a foxy, rubicund Flemish face, wearing a shabby, fur-trimmed gown.

His hand raised before him in a prehensile gesture, he is embarked upon a sentence, delineating the family responsibilities of the Cardinal Virtues. But for all his eagerness, all the twirling of his verbal net, the subject is about to escape from him; he requires a single epithet in order to secure it; he finds the epithet. The silence that ensues on the conclusion of the sentence is at length broken not by a murmur of agreement from the meagre audience but by a shrill little cry coming from downstairs; reminding his hearers that, unlike almost all the eminent philosophers of the age, their teacher is not a childless celibate, but a family man—and reminding us that this chamber is not a hall of the University, but (more likely) the unofficial private academy that so annoyed those same Curators whom he flattered as “most noble and most generous sirs”, and whose merest nod or frown he declared would be enough to cause him willingly to rewrite his entire opus . . .

Or perhaps, likelier still, Geulincx sits alone, celibate for the nonce, in his cramped study, that theatre of the mind, lecturing to imaginary students, reading aloud (in an age that still regarded reading in silence as spooky) his own inchoate thoughts. And the result of this communing is at length something more substantial than a *mot juste*. For Geulincx does not have references, he has *afterthoughts*; he does not write footnotes to the main text in footnote language; he writes *Annotations*. Only at one remove, in a few Annotations, does he descend to footnotes, doubtless alive to the comic effect of annotating Annotations, parodying scholarship. You then, imaginary students, are more privileged than those few real students, and this is not just Geulincx' mind, but your mind, readers.

To convey all the earthy colours, not only of the words but of the world of the *Ethics* in bleached contemporary English would, I concluded, have been impossible. But to convey them in any form whatsoever would have been equally impossible without the unique judgement and expertise of my collaborators, Dr. Han van Ruler and Dr. Anthony Uhlmann. It is to these two guides that I now commend you.

MW

INTRODUCTION

If it has been the conviction of many times and places that the need to take action in life should not compel us to fixate on desired effects, Arnold Geulincx' *Ethics* is the seventeenth-century expression of a more universal plea for mental detachment. With its focus on the Will of God rather than fortune, nature or fate, it fitted well with the general spirit of the European Baroque. In the wake of the Reformation, there was a religious trauma to deal with, and calls for a complete dedication to the divine could be heard far beyond Calvinist Leiden and Jansenist Louvain. Yet in its curious combination of ethical, metaphysical and epistemological views, in its particular blend of philosophy, science and religion, Geulincx' *Ethics* is a book that stands all on its own.

Arnold Geulincx (1624–1669) moved from Louvain to Leiden in 1658, the short distance separating Catholic from Protestant lands that had still been united a few generations before. Whether the young and successful philosopher had planned to go north on his own initiative remains unclear. He is said to have made an initial visit to Leiden in 1657, but in January 1658, Geulincx was suddenly dismissed from his Louvain University post. Since the circumstances of his deposition have always been clouded in mystery, what caused the Louvain professors to dismiss their young colleague in such a summary manner has been the subject of wild speculation. Geulincx may have had doctrinal disagreements with them, and an eighteenth-century source, partly based on documents now lost, also mentions financial debts.¹ Yet it is equally possible that Geulincx was being punished for engaging in a sexual relationship with Susanna Strickers, a girl from the countryside who may have been his cousin and was to become his wife.²

¹ Cf. Jean Noël Paquot, *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire litteraire des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas, de la principauté de Liege, et de quelque contrées voisines*, vol. 13, Louvain: De l'imprimerie academique, 1768, 69. Details on the life of Arnold Geulincx as well as references to further literature may be found in my article in Wiep van Bunge et al., *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2003, vol. 1, 322–331.

² The first to offer the idea that his relationship with Susanna may have been the reason for Geulincx' dismissal was J.P.N. Land, who suggested in 1887 that

Whatever had happened in or around Louvain, a falsified version of Geulincx' motives, given a few months later in Leiden, would prove far more relevant to the history of philosophy. In Holland Geulincx had to start afresh and he managed to receive the support of some influential theologians. No doubt with the best of intentions, these men, Abraham Heidanus (1597–1678), Johannes Coccejus (1603–1669) and Johannes Hoornbeek (1617–1666), portrayed their younger colleague in a letter of recommendation as a brave religious refugee who had given up his former life and all of his possessions for the sake of the Protestant faith.³

Heidanus, the senior theologian of the three, knew well what he was doing. He had bigger plans for this new protégé. A modernist in philosophy and an Augustinian in faith, Arnold Geulincx was the perfect candidate to fulfil a task Heidanus was eager to support: the invention of a Christian philosophy of morals.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CLASSICS

The idea of a Christian ethics was something of a paradox. By 1669, the year in which Geulincx died with his book left unfinished, strains of classical thought had been seeping into the Christian conception of the blessed life for more than a century and a half. Since the days of Erasmus, a spiritual approach to the Christian faith had gradually drowned the message of otherworldly resurrection. There were mental fruits in this life and pagan motifs to give Christian dogma a more moral and psychological interpretation. Yet rather than being the straightforward outcome of this humanistic approach,

Geulincx had married Susanna against university rules. Cf. J.P.N. Land, 'Arnold Geulincx te Leiden (1658–1669)', in *Verslagen en Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde*, 3rd series, vol. 3 (1887), 277–327. Note that when Geulincx' predecessor William Philippi (1600–1665) had been allowed to marry, it was expressly stated that he would be the last Louvain academic to be granted such a privilege. Cf. Paquot, *Memoires*, vol. 7, 212—a source suggested to Land by Victor Vander Haeghen: 'La faculté obtint cependant que les professeurs (de philosophie) qui se marieroient à l'avenir seroient privés de leur chaire; ce qui a toujours été observé depuis.' On Philippi, see also Georges Monchamp, *Histoire du cartésianisme en Belgique*, Brussels: Hayez, 1886, 317 ff.

³ A. Eekhof, 'De wijgeer Arnoldus Geulincx te Leuven en te Leiden', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, new series, nr 15 (1919), 1–24. The Latin text of the letter is reproduced on pp. 18–20.

Geulincx' *Ethics* is an extraordinary attempt to reinvest the ancient approach to ethics with an input of a genuinely Christian flavour.

On the outside—and true to the ideas of his Leiden patron Heidanus—Geulincx opposed pagan ways of moral thinking. Repeated criticisms of Aristotle and Seneca illustrate his aim and aspiration to offer an alternative to the schools and systems of antiquity. At the same time, if his Christian alternative was to be a purely philosophical one, argued from the viewpoint of reason without referring to either theological dogma or Scripture, it could hardly escape borrowing crucial elements from the philosophical tradition. Details of Aristotelian thought accordingly survive, such as the concept of finding the right mean in between virtue's excesses and defects. Still, in Aristotle's case Geulincx was able at least to keep a clear distance from the notion that ethics was essentially an effort at excellence and virtue a question of habit. Such views were relatively easy targets for the Christian critic. An early modern moralist encountered much more difficulty in keeping a pious distance from Stoic views. Two main points of opposition to Stoicism seem to have surfaced in seventeenth-century thought, both clearly evident in Geulincx: (1) pessimism with regard to the possibility of mastering fate and acquiring a lasting tranquillity and (2) a rejection of suicide.⁴ Yet Stoic analyses were too close to early modern Christian conceptions of the good life to be entirely ignored. Embracing the idea that human happiness could not be based on primary experience, but had to be found through a process of rational reflection that might deliver the soul from the automatism of its subjective illusions, Geulincx was never far away from what might seem to an outsider a genuinely Stoic point of view.

Irony would accordingly have it that the first complete edition of Geulincx' *Ethics* carried as its motto the opening lines of Seneca's *De vita beata*:

To live happily [...] is the desire of all men, but their minds are blinded to a clear vision of what makes life happy.⁵

⁴ Cf. my forthcoming article 'L'amour de Dieu pour le sage. Notions philosophiques de la béatitude d'Érasme à Spinoza'.

⁵ Seneca, *De vita beata ad Gallionem* I, 1. Translation from John W. Basore's edition: Seneca, *Moral Essays*, volume 2, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard University Press, 1932, 99. Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Gnothi Seauton, Sive (...) Ethica*, Leiden: A. Severini, 1675/Amsterdam: Jansenio-Waesbergii, 1691, A4/Revised edition

Even in a motto like this, however, the editor, too, chose to distance himself from the ancients. Where Seneca had said that taking the wrong road might lead one away in the opposite direction, a curious line was added, explaining that this was what ‘usually happens today and previously happened in all the schools of the Pagans.’ Seneca had presumably fallen into the trap he himself had warned against. What was needed to avoid it, according to Geulincx, was to work on one’s motivation. He agreed with some of the ancients that the road to wisdom could not be based on habitual and instinctive drives, but had to be found through a cultivated concern for one’s own conduct and a concentrated compliance with the law of Reason. What he rejected in their systems was their inability to see that such compliance could not be based on selfish motivations.

Laws, according to Geulincx, never correspond to obvious forms of self-interest, or they would not be laws. In an annotation to the Preface of the *Ethics*, Geulincx refers to the marginal notes of his own Dutch edition (1667) of Treatise I, where he had stated and restated this crucial point.⁶ A law, ‘inasmuch as it is a law,’ does not aim at the advantage of those who are held to observe it; it is by definition a ‘burden’ that has to be ‘enforced’.⁷ Accusing all ancient philosophers of being preoccupied with self-interest, Geulincx showed himself to be well aware of the element of *souci de soi*, or ‘care of the self’, that Michel Foucault has famously presented as an essential aspect of all moral systems of antiquity.⁸ Contrary to

by Johannes Flenderus and Abraham Hazeu, Amsterdam, Janssonio-Waesbergii, 1696, A4.

⁶ See Annotation 2 to Treatise I, Preface, below, 167–168. The same point is made in Annotation 13 to Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 5, 252–253, below.

⁷ Arnout Geulincx, *Van de Hooft-deuchden: De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667/*Van de Hooft-deuchden: De Eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, ed. J.P.N. Land, Antwerpen – Gent – ’s Gravenhage: Buschmann – Hoste – Nyhoff, 1895, 76 and 78–79: ‘Let noch eens (daer is aen gelegen) op het voorighe, daer wy seggen, *Wet, voor so veel wet is, en siet op geen voordeel van den verplichten*: Wet, voor soo veel sy wet is, is last: en die een wet krygt, dien wordt yet belast, yet op geleyt: hy is aen de wet verbonden, hy isser aen gehouden: en wanneer hy de wet volbrengt, so doet hy synen last: Dit is een manier van spreken, en gemeynen tael van alle Natien.’ Cf. Arnout Geulincx, *Van de hoofddeugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 141–142, notes to p. 88.

⁸ Though Foucault applied the notion of ‘the care of the self’ to late antiquity in particular, he made it clear that the theme was classical in origin. Cf. Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. 3, ‘Le souci de soi’, Paris: Gallimard, 1984: 60–63/Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, vol. 3, ‘The Care of the Self’, New York: Vintage Books, 1988, 43–45.

Foucault, however, Geulincx tried to distance himself from this idea as far as possible. The two-faced egotism of the pagans had perversely misrepresented selflessness as a crafty—and therefore ultimately ineffective—form of self-care. Humility was to be its Christian antidote.

Yet how to seek blessedness if not on the basis of self-interest? The appropriation of classical literature by humanist Christian authors had opened up the possibility of an intermediate position between what Foucault saw as the self-care of the ancients on the one hand and the Christian focus on conscience and confession on the other. But what if the Christian rules of purity and virginity were themselves interpreted as forms of psychological self-management? There is no question but that humanist authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appropriated classical ideas of ‘virtuous’ and ‘masculine’ reserve such as they were presented by Cicero, Epictetus and Seneca as valid forms of psychological empowerment within their own, Christian, tradition. Geulincx, however, now tried again to dissociate the two and the solution he came up with was as simple as it was hazardous in its psychological effect: find happiness by not seeking it! As he explains in an annotation of his own to the start of the chapter on humility, all depends on one’s capability to make the right distinction between one’s intentions and their results:

The virtuous man, so far as his intention is concerned, in no way cares for himself, and does not work in his own interest; but so far as the result is concerned, cares for himself best of all, and labours hard for his own interest.⁹

Selflessness alone would have the right result, whereas all the efforts of the vulgar and of the philosophers of antiquity deliberately to seek happiness for themselves were bound to end in ruin and disappointment.

With no revealed laws of morality, but only philosophical reason as one’s guide, this strategy was full of paradox from the start. Geulincx himself discusses an apparent inconsistency where he explains his ‘sixth obligation’, i.e. the rule that one should relax and be merry from time to time, and revert to ‘dining, drinking, dancing’.¹⁰ If this is to be a moral rule, then how could one distinguish those who led

⁹ See below, 218, Annotation 3.

¹⁰ See below, 50ff.

a free and easy life from the virtuous people who loosen up out of respect for the human condition, and decide to accept not only life's hardships, but its benefits as well? Sexual indulgence was not a viable option to discuss in the context of post-Reformation thought, but if one of the crucial demands of moral philosophy was to not let oneself be overcome by the strains and sufferings we necessarily encounter, the modern reader might as well add erotic pleasures to the class of virtuous forms of spiritual abatement.

To Geulincx, the right intention was all that mattered. Though the virtuous and the vicious merry-maker may be indistinguishable on the outside, their respective aims are entirely at odds. The case of the partygoer, Geulincx explains, is similar to that of the self-denying puritan, who may just as well be driven by either hypocrisy or sincerity. Such opposite attitudes are not to be distinguished on the basis of external conduct. In fact they are very hard to distinguish, although it may be useful to try and distinguish them too, since people are never entirely able to hide their inner objectives from others. Real intentions always show!¹¹

This still leaves Geulincx' answer full of ambiguities. If the alternative is between the demands of God and reason on the one hand and one's egoistically motivated drives and inclinations on the other, one will hardly ever be able to assess the moral status of one's acts of indulgence. Such dilemmas are no doubt the sum and substance of religious distress with respect to one's own integrity and sincerity. Though it may seem to trouble the Calvinist mind in particular, it is in fact a problem for all philosophical interpretations of religious systems that distinguish self-centred from virtuous intentions and promise spiritual rewards on account of the latter. If philosophy was to interpret religious aims in terms of spiritual enlightenment, it would remain hard to disentangle Christian moral thought from the naturalistic views of the ancients, who had simply presented moral autonomy in terms of a care of the self.

The dilemma was well exemplified in the 1696 edition of Geulincx' *Ethics*, in which the editors added to the already mutilated motto from Seneca a quotation from René Descartes, expressing a similar

¹¹ See below, page 53, as well as 276, towards the end of Annotations 11 and 14: even though virtuous men and vicious men may do the same, 'they still do it differently.'

early-modern unease with the shallowness of pagan thought. 'I compared the moral writings of the ancient pagans,' wrote Descartes,

to very proud and magnificent palaces built only on sand and mud. They extol the virtues, and make them appear more estimable than anything else in the world; but they do not adequately explain how to recognize a virtue, and often what they call by this fine name is nothing but a case of callousness, or vanity, or desperation, or parricide.¹²

A new philosophy was needed in order adequately to recognize a virtue. In the eyes of Arnold Geulincx as well as of many of his contemporaries, this was exactly what René Descartes, Heidanus's old Leiden acquaintance, had already done. Just as he had put an end to the fruitless enterprise of scholastic physics, Descartes was thought to have ended the deadlock of humanistic moral thought.

FROM DESCARTES TO SPINOZA

The air was full of expectation in and around Leiden in the early 1660's. Descartes' new philosophy had included a new science of man that was transforming accepted beliefs with regard to the soul's operations. Whereas mental life had previously been defined in purely psychological terms, Descartes' *Les Passions de l'Âme* (1649) inaugurated a way of reasoning that took an interest in the nervous system and the brain. An even better model for what was later to become the subject matter of the life sciences was Descartes' book *On Man*. In 1662 it was first published in a Latin translation in Leiden by Florentius Schuyl (1619–1669), who would soon become Geulincx' colleague.¹³

Schuyl too was a champion of the Augustinian type of Cartesianism encouraged by Heidanus. He earned a certain reputation for his essay on the uniqueness of the soul in human beings, which he

¹² René Descartes, *Discours de la méthode*, AT VI, 7–8. Translation from CSM I, 114. Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Gnothi Seauton, Sive (. . .) Ethica*, ed. Johannes Flenderus and Abraham Hazeu, Amsterdam: Janssonio-Waesbergii, 1696, A4v.

¹³ Schuyl became professor of medicine in 1664 and died, together with Geulincx, in the Leiden plague of 1669. Cf. *The Dictionary of Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century Dutch Philosophers*, Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 2003, vol. 2, 905–909. Further: G.A. Lindeboom, *Florentius Schuyl (1619–1669) en zijn betekenis voor het Cartesianisme in de geneeskunde*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974 and Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, *From Beast-Machine to Man-Machine: Animal Soul in French Letters from Descartes to La Mettrie*, New York: Diss. Columbia University, 1940/New York: Octagon Books, 1968, 245–249 esp.

included as a preface to his edition of *De Homine*. Written at a time when vivisection was gaining ground in improvised Leiden laboratories, Schuyt's anthropocentric arguments may easily be read as a metaphysical apology for cruelty to animals.¹⁴ They were not, however, intended as such. In fact, whilst the experiments offered students and academics an opportunity to witness practical illustrations of the new physiology's theoretical claims, Schuyt's essay focused on the mystery of consciousness. The new mechanical view of bodily processes had freed the soul of the biological functions that had always been attributed to it, so that now the idea was born that there must be some 'random' function to the soul, which presumably had been especially designed for cultural, spiritual and moral purposes. This idea excited Florentius Schuyt as much as it would later make Nicholas Malebranche hyperventilate upon reading some passages in Descartes' *L'homme*.¹⁵ The basic idea of Descartes' book was that all organic and many psychological functions could be explained without a reference to the soul. To explain digestive and motor systems was a revolution in itself. Yet Descartes also claimed that the sensorimotor functions, i.e. the power of perception and its accompanying bodily reactions, were purely mechanical. From a scientific standpoint, this was the greatest contribution of *De Homine*: its description of involuntary reflexes.

Descartes' French editor Claude Clerselier was sufficiently impressed with Schuyt's preface to have his son translate it and have it included in his own edition of *L'homme* (1664). Yet his own preface centred more on the biological aspects of Descartes' work and their psychological and metaphysical implications. In all the examples of this much neglected text, ranging from the unconscious recitation of prayer to the psychosomatic mechanics of toilet training, the pivotal idea is that behavioural automatisms may either function naturally, or be built up through instruction, without any posterior intervention of the conscious will or human soul:

¹⁴ At the time, only the Danish student and later scientist and Catholic prelate Niels Stensen (or Nicolaus Steno, 1638–1686) seems to have taken pity on the frightened animals that underwent operation. Cf. Gerrit A. Lindeboom, 'Dog and Frog. Physiological experiments at Leiden during the seventeenth century', in Th.H. Lunsingh Scheurleer and G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes (eds), *Leiden University in the Seventeenth Century. An Exchange of Learning*, Leiden: Brill, 1975, 281.

¹⁵ Cf. Yves Marie André/Augustin Marie Pierre Ingold (ed.), *La Vie du R.P. Malebranche, prêtre de l'Oratoire, avec l'histoire de ses ouvrages*, Paris: Librairie Poussielgue frères, 1886/reprint Genève: Slatkine, 1970, 12.

Did it never happen to you, as it did to me, that whilst reciting your prayers you did not pay any attention to what you were saying, but that you still continued to say your prayers instantly without failing, much better in fact than if you had paid a lot of attention to it? This shows that it is only the mainspring of the machine that unwinds itself and slackens its cord.¹⁶

Descartes had managed to banish the notion of the soul to such an extent from a scientific description of the body that Cartesians now claimed a neurophysiological automatism might be responsible even for what we mumble in prayer.

In such a context, the division of labour between body and soul had to be reconsidered all over again. What if the world of nature, including our own bodies, were really a single and complex machine, the actions and movements of which behaved with complete regularity? A more fundamental question occurred at the moment of wilful intervention, or training. If a sudden attentiveness in prayer makes a difference to the mechanical process of recitation, what are we to say of the power of the mind to change such a process? Are independent processes instantly rearranged at the exceptional occurrence of a conscious mental state? How can a mind, if it is really a singularity within the clockwork of nature, influence the body or be influenced by it? It was the metaphysical reformulation of these puzzles in terms of causal agency that would give Arnold Geulincx the dubious honour of being classed among those whom history has labelled 'occasionalists'.

Geulincx argued that experience and the study of human anatomy may well teach us 'how and where motion is distributed through our limbs.' Like Clerselier, however, he understood that such knowledge would not help us move them. Indeed, if we want

to use that kind of experience to control the motion of our body, so far from helping us it will make matters worse, and plainly render us feeble and ineffective.¹⁷

In whatever way mind-body cooperation worked, the influence of consciousness was not necessarily advantageous to the production of a particular effect. If natural causes were anything like natural souls, all processes would be hampered rather than advanced. But then

¹⁶ Claude Clerselier, 'Préface', in Louis de la Forge, *L'homme de René Descartes*, Paris: Jacques le Gras, 1664/ed. Thierry Gontier, Paris: Fayard, 1999, 55.

¹⁷ See below, 229, Annotation 12.

what are causes? Ever since the troubles between Descartes and Voetius back in the 1640's, it had been clear to the supporters of the modernists' position that the main problem with Scholastic physics had been its acceptance of soul-like causal factors within nature, peripatetic philosophy's 'substantial forms'.¹⁸ Those who followed Descartes, rejected the forms, arguing that they were unnecessary metaphysical agents that added nothing to the explanation of natural processes. Matter in motion and the disposition of its parts sufficiently explained nature's ways, so that only a single hypothesis was needed; viz. that God had initially imparted motion on a universe of undifferentiated matter, upon which all subsequent clockwork processes followed without further factors interfering. Substantial forms were ridiculed as philosophical relics from a bygone age by the likes of Heidanus, in much the same way as Molière was to ridicule the notion of a 'dormitive power' in opium.¹⁹ It was only the more philosophically inclined, such as Leibniz and Spinoza, who still sought to invest nature with the causal power of 'substance' and its 'action'.

Geulincx saw no need for natural causes besides God. Indeed, as he formulated it himself, the Scholastics had illegitimately 'enlisted natural things as efficient causes.' As an alternative to the metaphor of causal activity, Geulincx therefore introduced the metaphor of an

¹⁸ Cf. J.A. van Ruler, *The Crisis of Causality: Voetius and Descartes on God, Nature and Change*, Leiden: Brill, 1995.

¹⁹ Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* (1673) ends with a marvellous graduation scene (3rd intermezzo), in which a medical candidate replies to the first question posed to him by an opponent that 'the cause and reason why opium induces sleep' is because it has a 'dormitive power': 'Mihi à docto Doctore/Domandatur causam & rationem, quare/Opium facit dormire?/A quoy respondeo,/Quia est in eo/Virtus dormitiva,/Cujus est natura/Sensus assoupire.' This satified the doctors and apothecaries present: 'Bene, bene, bene, bene respondere/Dignus, dignus est entrare/In nostro docto corpore.' Cf. Molière, *Le Malade imaginaire, Comédie, Meslée de Musique, & de Dançe. Représentée sur le Theatre du Palais Royal*, Paris: Christophe Ballard, 1673, 30. Heidanus similarly argued that substantial forms merely masked ignorance. See e.g. *Bedenkingen, Op den Staat des Geschils, Over de Cartesiaensche Philosophie, En op de Nader Openinghe Over eenige stukken de Theologie raeckende*, Rotterdam: Johannes Benting, 1656, 7–8: 'Tis seker anders niet als een bevvijs van onze armoede en gebrek van beter, dat vvy tot noch toe, om niet sonder Philosophie te sijn, ons hebben moeten behelpen met sulke stollen en van alle kanten tsamen geraapte stukken (...) die alleen maar in vvoorden bestaan. (...) Dat by aldien men alleen vveet gevvaech te maaken van een Nature, forma substantialis, occulta qualitas, sympathia, antipathia, en vvat diergelijke termen meer is (...). Voorvvaar een gereden vvegh om sonder eenige studien en ondersouk, op staande voet, en sonder bedenken van alles datmen vveet en niet en vveet, sijn oordeel te kunnen uytspreken, en voor een goet Philosophooph gehouden te vverden!' The critique of the forms is continued on pages 12, 68, 75 and 83.

instrument: all causality lies with the Mover, who produces the ‘great variety of effects for our senses’ using ‘motions and the various parts of matter on which he impresses them as if they were his instruments.’²⁰ That would leave all causality to God, who makes nature unwind itself without there being any interference by secondary causal production factors. But what of our own soul? Is it not a singular and exceptional centre of causality? According to Geulincx, this would only be true if the soul would actually interfere with nature, which, he says, is never the case. Our causality rests wholly within the mind, where we are free to think and will and experience. We may well function biologically and even psychologically without making much use of free will. It is only by thinking and willing that we really make use of our freedom and it is at this point that ethics and morality come into the picture. We are moral agents within the cavern of our soul whenever we are determined to act in a certain way.

In fact, according to Geulincx, we are *only* moral agents. Lacking the causal power to interfere in a universe deprived of agents besides God, what we are left with is to think and will within the mental realm and depend on nature—or rather ‘God’s will’—to see our volitions satisfied. Geulincx’ famous images of the two clocks and of the baby in its cradle—rocked when it wants it to be rocked, though unable to rock the cradle itself—are meant to illustrate the fundamental axiom of God’s unique causality.²¹ Yet strangely enough, this notion of our total dependence on God plays hardly any part on the practical side of Geulincx’ ethics. The only metaphysical idea of direct relevance to morality is the awareness of the human condition itself. Metaphysics will make us realise that we are conscious beings trapped in a material world.

In his metaphysical views, Geulincx shows a proto-existentialist attention to ‘being there’ which is not unlike that of his French Jansenist contemporary Blaise Pascal. Its moral consequence, for Geulincx, was one of acceptance. One cannot choose to live, nor die by simply willing it. To accept such a position will imply that one avoids suicide and prepares for anything that may be necessary for the continuation of the condition one finds oneself in. The main rationale for this is the idea that our unsolicited birth seems naturally to imply that we should preserve this condition. Geulincx’ God is

²⁰ See below, Annotation 9, 226.

²¹ See below, 39; as well as 232, Annotation 19; and 249–250, Annotations 6 and 7.

primarily to be seen as the one who put us here. For the rest, His operations are as natural as they must be for us to be able to know what to seek and avoid. Geulincx accordingly never uses the occasionalist idea of a will trapped inside a body in order to dispute the need for action. His metaphysics functions primarily as a means for getting to know the human predicament. Yet it does have a further role to play insofar as it gives rise to a morally relevant epistemology.

A mind trapped inside a body has no initial information about its surroundings. It will slowly have to learn how to cope with it. Knowledge, in its Cartesian interpretation, is therefore always a question of degrees. What Geulincx liked most about Descartes was the latter's theory of error and in particular the subject matter of *Principia Philosophia* I, 71: the way in which a child gets in touch with the world that surrounds it.²² Having lived and acted primarily on the basis of first impressions, it later learns how these impressions have come about. Such rational reconstructions are the essence of Cartesian science. Geulincx' contribution was that he distinguished three levels of awareness, depending on the ways in which we come into contact with the world. If there is a collision between our body and the outside world that we are not aware of—such as happens in sight and hearing—we attribute the sounds and images to things that exist apart from us. If, however, we feel the collision, we localise the sense of touch or pain in our own limbs. If a feeling is caused within our body without being accompanied by pain, we do not localise it at all, and simply judge that 'we ourselves' are hungry.²³ All these projections are accompanied by forms of sensory illusion on account of which we attribute colours, sounds and smells to the things as they are in themselves. It is 'wisdom', according to Geulincx, to attain the stage of epistemological continence at which we no longer attribute our experiences to what may have been their cause. This, however, does not mean that we will no longer be prone to error. A child may think that a pole sticking out of a clear pool of water is broken or bent at the point where the stick meets the surface. A grown-up will have learned that this is not the case and that the laws of refraction cause a straight stick to seem bent. Yet even

²² Sensation, according to Geulincx, begins in the womb. See below, 277, Annotation 2.

²³ Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Introduction, Section 2, and Annotations, in *Opera* II, 202 and 301 in particular.

a grown-up will see a bent stick and will always remain inclined to believe his senses.

Moral wisdom, according to Geulincx, is based on overcoming similar illusions in the ethical domain. In the fourth part of his *Ethics*, a clear parallel is drawn between, on the one hand, our epistemological proclivity to attribute impressions to the natural processes that have occasioned them, and our moral proclivity to act on the basis of passionate incentives on the other. Again, the aim of total sovereignty is delusive, since no-one will ever be free of passionate drives and inclinations. So long as the human condition lasts, pure knowledge will be obscured by automatic mental proclivities in both the scientific and the moral realm—which is why Geulincx often freely shifts between science and morals, taking the liberty, for instance, to illustrate an epistemological argument by pointing to a text that for nearly two centuries had been the focal point of confessional morality: the letters of St. Paul. Not to achieve the heights of wisdom, says Geulincx, is never a sin in itself. If ‘I do that which I would not’, as the Apostle says, ‘it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.’²⁴

Cartesianism here aligned itself with Christian convictions. The lack of knowledge in childhood makes us interpret our experience in illusory ways. Whatever haughty Stoicism held attainable in terms of wisdom, these original sensations designed for our blind survival will never be fully drowned out by the later use of reason. Yet like his contemporary Spinoza, it is on the basis of this Cartesian epistemology that Geulincx draws a moral ideal: subsequent levels of knowledge may still transform our first impressions to such an extent that from first impressions we may ultimately arrive at a love of God. Presenting ‘wisdom’ to his Leiden students as a fourth grade of knowledge and telling them that an ultimate form of happiness lay hidden in beginning ‘to understand something about God’ and in sharing this with others, Geulincx’ philosophy was a Christian blueprint for Spinoza.²⁵

²⁴ Romans 7: 16–17. Cf. Geulincx, *Annotata ad Metaphysicam*, Annotation to *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Introduction, Section 2, in *Opera* II, 302.

²⁵ Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 3, “Sexta Scientia” in *Opera* II, 192–193 and 291–293. Cf. *Metaphysics*, 105–107.

THE ROAD FROM LEIDEN TO THE HAGUE

It is doubtful whether Geulincx ever met the apostate Jew. Judged by its frequent use as an example in class, the way through the woods from Leiden to The Hague must have been familiar to the professor as well as his students. We do not know whether Geulincx ever took it in order to make a journey to Voorburg. Spinoza himself had lived even closer to Leiden from 1661 to 1663, no doubt visiting and revisiting the city and its university. He is even thought to have lived in the city itself around the time that Geulincx moved there.²⁶ Many a detail in the writings of both authors, moreover, would seem to indicate that the two philosophers knew each other, or at least knew each other's work. And yet the question whether they did or did not, will probably remain unresolved. Neither ever mentioned the other, at least not in the documents that have come down to us. Many of the similarities in their works, moreover, may be explained by their common philosophical background, their shared interest in Cartesianism and in the application of its epistemology to the subject of ethics.²⁷

Later critics would nevertheless see Geulincx and Spinoza as associates in crime, although it would take some time for that to happen. Whereas Spinoza was immediately condemned as an atheist upon the posthumous publication of his *Ethics* in 1677, the posthumous publication of Geulincx' *Ethics* in 1675 was advertised as providing a possible antidote to the silent spread of Spinozism.²⁸ Ministers of the Dutch Reformed church found new philosophical inspiration in Geulincx' book for a while. Even Ruardus Andala (1665–1727), the Frisian minister who was to become Geulincx' staunchest enemy, was at first a Geulincxian himself. When, as a professor at Franeker

²⁶ Cf. Steven Nadler, *Spinoza. A Life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 163–173.

²⁷ See my article 'Geulincx and Spinoza: Books, Backgrounds and Biographies', to be published in *Studia Spinozana*.

²⁸ [Cornelis Bontekoe,] 'Preface' to Arnold Geulincx, *Gnothi Seauton, Sive (. . .) Ethica*. Leiden: A. Severini, 1675/ed. Amsterdam, Jansonius-Waesbergii, 1691, *3v–*4/ed. Johannes Flenderus and Abraham Hazeu, Amsterdam, Jansonius-Waesbergii, 1696, *7v–[*8]. On the reception of Spinoza's ideas prior to the publication of his *Ethics*, see Wiep van Bunge, *From Stevin to Spinoza: An Essay on Philosophy in the Seventeenth-Century Dutch Republic*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, 108–118.

university, Andala later began to attack Geulincx, he was still hesitant to do so for fear of hurting old friends.²⁹

In the eighteenth century, the idea quickly spread that not only Spinoza, but Geulincx too, was an atheist. This view was often based on gratuitous associations of Geulincx with his famous contemporary, but there were also authentic concerns amongst some philosophical moderates in the Age of Reason that morality would be undermined by biological and purely natural explanations of human behaviour. Whereas a present-day reader may be inclined to associate Geulincx' emphasis on free will with an all too easy moralism, moralists of the Enlightenment period feared a loss of morality if too much attention was given to the mechanical origin of our psychological states. Jean-Pierre De Crousaz' (1673–1750) fight against fatalism and Spinozism, for instance, was fought in terms of an attack on 'the system of occasional causes'. Crousaz insisted that there were genuine forces at work even in physical processes. This would make it easier to defend the existence of individually responsible causal factors in questions of morality. Crousaz admitted that a pious regard for God's omnipotence could have motivated authors of good faith to argue against the existence of secondary causes. Nevertheless, he warned that people would turn their eyes away from divine law and conscience if they got the idea that they had no role to play in their own actions and deeds. With their emphasis on the clockwork of nature, occasionalists were deemed no less dangerous than Spinoza.³⁰

Geulincx would not have recognized himself in Crousaz' criticisms, but it must be said that his *Ethics* stretched Christianity to the limit. Ruardus Andala already noticed the eccentricity of Geulincx' theory of moral 'indifference', arguing that Christianity taught no such thing. Instead of a mental aloofness, God in fact positively demanded that we seek our salvation, for which He promises a payoff in the after-life.³¹ Other peculiarities of Geulincx' Christianity include his naturalistic interpretation of prayer and his allegorical account of the

²⁹ Ruardus Andala, *Examen Ethicae Clar. Geulingii. sive Dissertationum Philosophicarum, in quibus praemissa Introductione sententiae quaedam paradoxae ex Ethica Clar. Geulingii examinantur*, Pentas, Franeker: Wibius Bleck, 1716, 'Preface' and 23.

³⁰ Jean de Crousaz, *Essay sur le Mouvement où l'on traite de sa Nature, de son Origine, de sa Communication en general, des Chocs des Corps qu'on suppose parfaitement Solides, du Plein & du Vuide, & de la Nature de la Reaction*, Groningen: Coste, 1726/The Hague: Alberts & Vander Kloot, 1728, 116–118.

³¹ Andala, *Examen Ethicae Clar. Geulingii*, 43–50.

works of the devil. Yet the most striking aspect of his attitude to matters of faith is that Geulincx invariably describes the religious position of Christians as if it were not his own. Even if it is true that the Christian view is always the one with which he himself concurs in the end, Geulincx nevertheless objectified the Christian position in such a way that it comes into view as simply one of the many alternative viewpoints.

Such is no doubt the price to pay for a Christian ethics. Presenting a religious position as the one that best suits human psychological and spiritual needs, one will naturally arrive at an outcome in which the religious position has no relevant properties beyond its psychological efficacy and will lose the distinctive identity it had in the purely religious context. It is no surprise that both Geulincx and Spinoza ended up with a theory of morals that included a philosopher's creed as opposed to the vulgar beliefs of the many and that neither in practice drifted very far away from the Stoic position that they both were so critical of in theory. In their standardization of human emotions, philosophers might offer a variety of psychological distinctions that everyday language never made use of.³² And with respect to the goal of philosophy, moral thinkers of the sixteenth and seventeenth century were in remarkable agreement. The universal goal was to attain that uncanny happiness or tranquillity, that 'inward and secret joy' of which Erasmus had said that it is 'known only by those who have achieved it.'³³ Geulincx' pupil Cornelis Bontekoe (c. 1644–1685) considered a 'sweet affection (*soete genegenheit*)' to all things (and to God in particular) as well as a 'lasting happiness (*gedurige vreugde*)' as the goal of both the 'good philosopher' and the 'enlightened Christian'.³⁴ Geulincx himself equally underlines the private and inexplicable character of delights known only to the virtuous:

³² Geulincx for instance argues that it is permissible to forge names for unnamed passions in Annotation 9, page 212, below. Spinoza likewise accepted the existence of passions for which there are no names. Cf. Spinoza, *Ethica* III, 22, *Scholium* and III, Definitions of the Affects 19 and 20, *Explicatio*.

³³ Desiderius Erasmus, *Enchiridion militis Christiani*, ed. Hayo and Annemarie Holborn, *Ausgewählte Werke*, Band 1, München: Beck, 1933 (1964²), p. 40. Translation from Raymond Himelick (ed.), *The Enchiridion of Erasmus*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1963, 62.

³⁴ Cornelis Bontekoe, *Opbouw der Medicynne*, Chapter 13, 'Van de middelen, om het Leven en de Gesondheid lang te bewaren, sich voor Siektens te hoeden, en d'Ouderdom en Dood een langen tijd af te weren', in *Alle de Philosophische, Medicinale en Chymische Werken*, Amsterdam: Jan ten Hoorn, 1689, vol. 2, 231.

The chaste delights of a mind dedicated to God, of a mind sworn to God's Law, and completely forswearing itself; chaste delights (why go on repeating the name of a thing, when the thing itself cannot be expressed by saying it?), dear delights, pure, generous delights. No-one can begin to be acquainted with such joys unless he rejoices in them: these joys are all joys of the heart.³⁵

Depicting his new set of four cardinal virtues as Goddesses, 'because they join and link us so closely with God,' Geulincx accentuates that they are a unique source of beatitude, indeed of 'all our blessedness (*beatitudo*) and happiness (*felicitas*).'³⁶ He thereby again touches upon what Spinoza would also claim, viz. that our 'salvation (*salus*), or blessedness (*beatitudo*), or freedom (*Libertas*)' consists in a 'constant and eternal love of God, or in God's love for men.' And this time it is Spinoza, not Geulincx, who says that such blessedness is identical to what 'is called glory (*Gloria*) in the Sacred Scriptures.'³⁷

Such similarities are striking. Even more remarkable, however, is the fact that the theme of spiritual beatitude disappeared altogether from higher European culture shortly after Geulincx and Spinoza. The *Amor intellectualis* with which Samuel Beckett's Murphy loved himself and travelled 'zones of his private world' culminating in a feeling '[so] pleasant that pleasant was not the word,' was as exceptional in 1938 as it was faintly amusing and sinister.³⁸ It was as close as the twentieth century could come to anything like the profound exultation expressed in early-modern treatises of ethics, the spiritual delights of which had now begun to seem forcibly euphoric.

PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY

Spiritual joys may hide actual pains. Arnold Geulincx, for one, was obsessed with suicide.³⁹ The man who had suffered public disgrace

³⁵ See below, 61.

³⁶ See below, 210, Annotation 5.

³⁷ Spinoza, *Ethics*, book 5, proposition 36, scholium. Translations from Edwin Curley (ed.), *A Spinoza Reader: The Ethics and Other Works*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994, 260–261.

³⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*, London: Routledge, 1938/London: Pan Books and Calder & Boyars, 1973, Chapter 6, 63–66, quotations from 65 and 66.

³⁹ See, for instance, Annotation 5 on page 246, below, which it is hard not to read as a personal outcry: 'I intend from the bottom of my heart that I will not give up the ghost out of disgust with life and the miseries of man's lot; but what I am actually going either to do or not to do, God alone knows.'

in Louvain and professional animosity as well as prolonged periods of utter poverty in Leiden, became preoccupied with the idea of holding on to life at all costs.⁴⁰ Academic work itself made things worse: '[Do I have a] mind both elevated and penetrating? Then I shall be a philosopher, and perfect others in wisdom and virtue.' This, obviously, was what Geulincx saw as his own particular task, and his description of the hardships that it entailed seems no less to be derived from personal experience: 'Harder things will lie in store for me, and not just hard, but dreadful: the censure of others will sting me, their malice will gnaw at me, their hostility oppress me and wear me down.'⁴¹ In a further passage, the plight of the academic is compared with the chances of shipwreck:

A ship is made ready, fitted-out, and weighs anchor for the Indies, but is plunged into a storm, or captured by pirates. A speech or lecture is perfectly pitched to secure fame and praise, composed with the utmost care, and elaborated by exhaustive study, but no honour ensues, no applause, only mockery and derision.⁴²

There is no doubt but that the author himself endured such incidents of 'great sadness and anxiety'. Even more conspicuous is the fact that they were here defined as 'the penalty of sin'. Only a deep awareness of inadequacy could help overcome what Geulincx himself considered as the self-love involved in expecting too much of the 'convenient' outcome of his efforts.

When philosophy finds peace in a total surrender to nature or subjection to God, it is time to have a look at the philosopher. Geulincx was an unhappy man and his philosophy an unhappy man's recipe for happiness. It is therefore not necessarily conducive to profitable modes of psychological self-help. In fact, what the British moral philosopher D.J. McCracken once approvingly described as

⁴⁰ Geulincx would never regain anything like his former Louvain status of senior professor. Debts and poverty haunted him, which probably explains why, at the time of Susanna's death in late 1669 (or in the first days of 1670), no rent had yet been paid for the house on Steenshuur which he and his wife had been living in since October 1668. Cf. E.F. Kossmann, 'De laatste woning van Arnold Geulincx', in *Bijdragen voor Vaderlandsche Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde*, seventh series, nr 3 (1933), 136–138. With only six professors being commemorated on the bronze medals that were issued in January 1670 as a memorial to the plague, Geulincx seems to have been overlooked. Cf. Victor Vander Haeghen, *Geulincx. Étude sur sa vie, sa philosophie et ses ouvrages*, Gent: Eug. Vanderhaegen, 1886, 17–18.

⁴¹ See below, 49.

⁴² See below, 143.

Geulincx' and Spinoza's 'Cartesian conviction of the unity of worth and fact', is a seventeenth-century form of *amor fati* that has met with sharp criticism in the work of others.⁴³ Recently the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek expressed his regret for Spinoza's popularity in academic culture today, criticising what he calls Spinoza's reduction of the deontological to the ontological. According to Žižek, attempts to reduce moral judgements to pure facts and to a non-moral verification of states of affairs, will only damage our capacity for taking responsibility in matters of morals and politics.⁴⁴ Within Spinoza's 'thorough rejection of negativity,' the so-called moral detachedness in fact conceals a hidden commander: 'Superego is on the side of knowledge.'⁴⁵

Other present-day critics focus on the way in which individual psychological characteristics suffer from a single-minded concentration on reasonableness. Cartesian philosophy only added to the conviction already found in classical systems of morality that mental freedom was to be won through a complete independence of all 'external' influences. Voicing a rare alternative, Martha Nussbaum has argued against interpreting human vulnerabilities as weaknesses that should be overcome. Though Nussbaum regards Spinoza as a philosopher who increased our understanding of the emotions, she nevertheless discerns psychologically destructive aspects in his particular version of 'contemplative ascent'. The ideal of the wise may carry great risks to being successfully human. With a sharp eye for psychological factors, Nussbaum argues that Spinoza's high ethical standards, like those of other moral systems in the Western tradition, may 'actually reinforce elements in the history of childhood emotion [that are] especially dangerous to morality,' such as shame and envy for want of control.⁴⁶

Where Spinoza is targeted, Geulincx is often implied. Yet Cartesianism has also been censured itself. In a daring book on *Philosophy and the Good Life*, the English Descartes-scholar John Cottingham

⁴³ Cf. D.J. McCracken, *Thinking and Valuing. An Introduction, Partly Historical, to the Study of the Philosophy of Value*, London: MacMillan and Co., 1950, 138.

⁴⁴ Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the negative. Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993, 216–218.

⁴⁵ Slavoj Žižek, 'Is It Possible Not to Love Spinoza?', in *Organs without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences*, New York: Routledge, 2004, 33–41.

⁴⁶ Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, in which Spinoza's position on love is discussed primarily in Chapter 10, § 4, 500 ff. The quotation is from page 14.

argued that there is a problem with all ‘synoptic’ theories of ethics, as he calls them, amongst which Descartes’ own moral philosophy. According to Cottingham, these pre-Freudian philosophies rely too much on the ‘anxious frettings of controlling reason’. Although this may be of use in the socio-political context, we may be greatly deluded by the dark and ‘guilty secrets’ of our ego if we let our ‘constructions of reason’ govern our individual pursuits.⁴⁷

Reviving a philosophy from the past has therefore become a dangerous business. It would seem to be even more precarious in Geulincx’ case, where we are dealing with a morality based on ‘humility’—a particularly undeserving frame of mind where it comes to psychological bloom. As if instantly correcting his Leiden peer on this one, Spinoza himself took care to make it explicit that ‘Humility is not a virtue.’⁴⁸ Coming to Geulincx’ defence we might argue that his particular version of humility, as well as his accompanying notion of obedience, were actually meant to avert people from social forms of humility and obedience. It is God, or reason, that one should obey—not others.⁴⁹ But that would not answer the problem. The fact remains that philosophy’s demands, the demands of universal reason, have a tendency severely to restrict the development of individual psychological capacities.

How, then, should we read this book? If we are to understand the writings of those who went before us, we shall have to take into account the conditions in which their ideas were set. Right at the opening of her book on the emotions in seventeenth-century philosophy, Susan James argued that ‘the place and analysis of the passions in seventeenth-century philosophy’ needed perhaps ‘to be steered in with some preamble, since its value (. . .) has darkened with time and grown opaque.’⁵⁰ The place and analysis of the emotions within the context of early-modern metaphysics and epistemology have indeed been obscured by later intellectual traditions, but this may not be the only reason why early-modern positions have grown alien to us. Geulincx, for one, seems to be talking to an audience very

⁴⁷ John Cottingham, *Philosophy and the good life. Reason and the passions in Greek, Cartesian and psychoanalytic ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Quotations from pages 137–138 and 166.

⁴⁸ Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, 53.

⁴⁹ See below, 293–294, Annotation 14.

⁵⁰ Susan James, *Passion and Action. The Emotions in Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997/2003², 1.

different from ourselves. How things have changed since the times when a university professor would teach his students the delights of going against their passions! How different are we, who talk of love and care of the self, from those for whom self-love was seen as an infringement on the love of God. Nor do our post-Romantic selves find comfort in the Augustinian idea that the spontaneity of youth was basically a form of moral deprivation. Trained in new traditions of psychological awareness, we no longer even share the faith, both classical and Christian, in the philosophical black and white of a *moral* happiness. And neither do we, who are so much less accustomed to sickness and death and so much more informed of mankind's atrocities and nature's disasters, so easily find peace in the idea of God's ultimate goodness—let alone in Geulincx' morbid notion of the supreme happiness and 'indescribable satisfaction' of Him to whom we owe our fate.⁵¹

Yet it was different times that bred such different voices. The repudiation of the passions that we find in a text such as the one here presented may have made less of an adverse impact on the individual psyches of its first readers for the simple reason that they were less burdened by the moral standards we ourselves have internalized. Geulincx' invariable message that our intentions morally outweigh our deeds—a view common to both Augustine's and the Reformation's reading of the New Testament—may well have had a psychologically empowering effect in its own day. Combined with the biological framework in which the passions were now set, the new focus on mental autonomy may even have occasioned a certain permissiveness with respect to the affairs of the body. Because of the prominence that authors like Geulincx, Bontekoe and Spinoza gave to the chaste delights of the mind and to the idea of mentally overcoming the power of the passions, it would seem excessive to read into their works a plea for sexual liberation. Yet they may have been read as libertines by others.⁵² Both Geulincx and Spinoza, in any

⁵¹ See below, 97–98.

⁵² Jonathan Israel discusses pleas for sexual liberation in authors influenced by Spinoza in Chapter 4 of his *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 82–96. Inger Leemans has pointed to publisher Timotheus ten Hoorn's (1644–1715) joint interest in pornography, Spinozism and Cartesian medicine and philosophy. Cf. Inger Leemans, *Het woord is aan de onderkant: Radicale ideeën in Nederlandse pornografische romans 1670–1700*, Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2002, 278–281.

case, are sure to have influenced the late seventeenth-century rise of antinomian thought in The Netherlands.⁵³ Readers may have come to their own conclusions when reading in Geulincx that ‘it is not *what is done*, but *why you do it*’ that makes something a virtue or vice, and that morality is ultimately a question of taking care of oneself.⁵⁴

Still, the memes and epistemes of early modern Europeans—deceitfully obvious as they may seem at first sight and ultimately explicable though they may be on further consideration—were very different from ours. From the days of Erasmus to well beyond Locke, the formation of the individual psyche was meant to fit the public aim of social unification. Moral education did not preoccupy itself with the acceptance of individual emotional idiosyncrasies such as later ideas of selfhood were to demand, but with the encouragement to pursue virtue for its own sake and to cultivate self-possession—topics that were as relevant to the burghers and city magistrates of early modern times as they had once been to the free civilians of antiquity.

Besides social and political reasons to master one’s emotional stance in the face of Fate, there were natural threats to life and health that called for a different attitude to the human condition. If it is true, as sociologist Zygmunt Bauman has argued, that postmodern Westerners ‘have been trained to stop worrying about things which apparently stay stubbornly beyond our power (. . .) and to concentrate our attention instead on the tasks within our (. . .) reach’,⁵⁵ how far have we not come from even those early eighteenth-century English, the mental attitude of whom Paul Hazard described in 1935:

As regards happiness, we should not ask too much of it. The quest of happiness is less necessary and less beneficial to the human race than the art of bearing up firmly in the midst of afflictions.⁵⁶

⁵³ Cf. Michiel Wielema, *The March of the Libertines. Spinozists and the Dutch Reformed Church (1660–1750)*, Hilversum: Verloren, 2004. Carolus Tuinman argued that besides Spinoza, it was Geulincx who had inspired libertinism in Zeeland. Cf. Carolus Tuinman, *A. Geulincx Medemaat van B. de Spinoza, en der Vrygeesten*, in: Carolus Tuinman, *De liegende en bedriegende vrygeest ontmaskert*, Middelburg: Jacobus Boter, Simon Clement and Willeboord Eling, 1715.

⁵⁴ For the quotation, see below, 291, Annotation 7.

⁵⁵ Zygmunt Bauman, *Identity. Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005, 74.

⁵⁶ Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience européenne (1680–1715)*, Paris: Boivin, 1935, vol. 2, 131. Translation by J. Lewis May, in Paul Hazard, *The European Mind [1680–1715]*, Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1963, 328.

Classic forms of *constantia* for the individual's inner life aligned themselves with the social demands that made the early-modern citizen an autonomous moral *persona*.

INSPECTIO SUI

Being able to grasp what conditions motivated the theories of those who went before us, we may still question their conclusions. All of the philosophical criticisms quoted from Žižek, Nussbaum and Cottingham seem to imply that a reasoned attitude to life will not work for psychological reasons. As we explained above, it may well be doubted whether it is feasible psychologically, as Geulincx demanded, to arrive at an objectively certifiable result of self-care without actively searching it for subjective motives.

Why is it that reasonable philosophies breed psychological deadlocks? The reason may be that the philosophical vista takes away the aspect of temporality in human action and awareness. While intellectual insight may have a consoling effect, it may just as well impair human vitality and vigour. As Nussbaum explains, a system of morals that focuses exclusively on an intellectual understanding of one's drives may set such high standards that spontaneity is lost. As Žižek affirms, superego norms take over. 'Philosophy,' Søren Kierkegaard observed, 'is perfectly right in saying that life must be understood backwards,' but it tends to forget that life itself 'must be lived forwards.'⁵⁷ The problem is, that philosophy has difficulty understanding the causal vacuum in which we experience our own decisions. Descartes himself elegantly skipped this problem in his *Passions de l'Âme* by writing a psychology that focused on both behavioural and mental training. But because of the apparent metaphysical problems involved in conceiving behavioural change, the ethical systems based on his philosophy tended to emphasize only the latter. The idea of therapy was thus completely overshadowed by the notion of an intellectual understanding by the separate mind.

⁵⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Papirer*, ed. P.A. Heiberg and V. Kuhr, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1912/ed. Niels Thulstrup, Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1968, vol. 4, 61. Translation from Howard V. Hong, Edna H. Hong and Gregor Malanschuk (eds), *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967, 450.

It would nevertheless be mistaken to read the works of later Cartesian authors as historical curiosities. Despite the fact that they present interesting psychological ideas of their own and contain remarkable views such as Geulincx' 'democratic' criteria for choosing a living—and despite the fact that their moral postulate of not letting oneself be enslaved by the pressure of outer conditions remains as alive today as it was in 1675—it is in these works, too, that we first encounter a reasoned attempt to explain human consciousness and its relation to cultural and biological forces, to nature's *Es* and society's *Über-Ich*.

Geulincx had a unique feel for describing mankind's peculiar situation. Conscious of its own existence without a clue of where it came from, and a stranger to its own surroundings as soon as it comes to question the point of its existence, man is a strange animal indeed. Geulincx' outlandish metaphysical views have left readers behind with a renewed sensation of wonder at things that tend to become too familiar to notice. For the Dutch classicist and philosopher Cornelis Verhoeven (1928–2001) the most remarkable effect of the 'simultaneity of action and contemplation' expressed in Geulincx' axioms was that they may make us become 'the astonished spectators even of our own activities and at the very moment we perform them.'⁵⁸ As will become clear from Anthony Uhlmann's essay further on in this volume, Samuel Beckett was equally struck by the imagery of Geulincx' moral and metaphysical work.

Others, however, judged it in very different terms. The German lawyer and philosopher Christian Thomasius (1655–1728) profoundly distrusted the efforts to derive a moral philosophy from Cartesian physics. He added a special word of caution for 'Arnold Geiling', whose ethics, or so Thomasius argued, were 'needlessly subtle and obscure.'⁵⁹ Though praising Geulincx for having been a unique precursor of Kant in ethics as well as in epistemology, the neo-Kantian philosopher and historian Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945) argued that it was due to the 'inner inadequacy' of Geulincx' thought that it had not received an historical aftermath.⁶⁰ When Cornelis Verhoeven published Geulincx' *Van de Hoof-deuchden* in a new Dutch edition in

⁵⁸ Cornelis Verhoeven, *Het axioma van Geulincx*, Bilthoven: Ambo, 1973, 78.

⁵⁹ Christian Thomasius, *Cautelae circa Praecognita Jurisprudendiae in Auditorii Thomasiiani*, Halle: Renger, 1710, 225.

⁶⁰ Ernst Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der neueren Zeit*, vol. 1 Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922³/reprint Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1974, 462.

1986, the general editors made sure to mention in their preface that the new experimental philosophy of the late 1600s had made clear that ‘the axiom on which Geulincx had built his ethics, was unsound.’⁶¹

The only substantial argument against it, however, came from David Hume, who said it was to no avail that ‘the *Cartesians*’ had recourse ‘to a supreme spirit or deity, whom they consider as the only active being in the universe, and as the immediate cause of every alteration in matter.’ Hume’s line of reasoning is complicated by his own epistemological preoccupations, yet he manages to get across the idea that the problem of finding an efficacious principle of causation in known objects, whether they be material or spiritual, will never be solved by introducing a divine spirit to perform the action for them. If the Cartesians argue that there are no causal forces in nature ‘because ’tis impossible to discover’ such powers, ‘the same course of reasoning shou’d determine them to exclude it from the supreme being.’⁶²

Yet Geulincx had been aware of this from the start. As he tells us in his *Metaphysics*: ‘Not only do we not understand the modality of such things as these, but also we understand that we can never understand them,’ which is why ‘even though our human condition is rightly called ineffable,’ it is rather God Himself who is ‘an ineffable Father.’⁶³ Prefiguring Hume’s argument, he adds that it is not only unclear how God ‘overcomes infinite power in order to move and divide bodies,’ but also how ‘He does so as a Mind.’ Yet contrary to Hume, this does not discourage Geulincx in the least. Seeing that God will have ‘to do something more in order to effect the motion that He has willed’ than simply to will it,

it must be frankly admitted that the modality of motion is beyond our conception, and that in this, His role as Mover, He is also ineffable.⁶⁴

⁶¹ M.J. Petry and J. Sperna Weiland, Preface to Arnout Geulincx, *Van de hoofd-deugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 9. The editors may have had in mind either Geulincx’ axiom ‘What I do not know how to do is not my action’ or ‘Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will’. Exactly in what way either of these two maxims was disproved by the ‘new experimental philosophy’ is not further explained.

⁶² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* I, 3, 14, ed. L.A. Selby-Bigge/P.H. Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978, 160.

⁶³ Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 3, ‘Tertia Scientia’, in *Opera* II, 188 and 288. Translations from *Metaphysics*, 97–98.

⁶⁴ Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 3, ‘Tertia Scientia’, 3rd Annotation to p. 191, in *Opera* II, 290–291. Translations from *Metaphysics*, 104–105.

It is quite clear that Geulincx had written and rewritten his first Treatise of *Ethics* in the 1660s in a continuous state of intellectual thrill. The final work, which is the combined product of the original Treatise, the later commentaries on it by the author, and the drafts for five more Treatises, still bears the marks of an excited rapture and an intellectual conviction that leaves hardly any room for systematic questioning and philosophical dialogue.

At the same time, few writers will admit to such paradoxes as those in which Geulincx gets himself entangled. Drawing towards a dramatic finale at the end of the first Treatise, he writes:

Humility carries her fruit in a box; but O! let her not unlock it!⁶⁵

Unlocking the treasure-chest of virtue, however, is exactly what this book itself had intended to do, viz. to arrive at a natural ethics, a theory of morals on a purely philosophical basis. Despite his occasional grandiloquence, Geulincx seems to have gathered more than once that this was actually an impossibly difficult project, and full of paradox. When, in his *Metaphysics*, Geulincx explains what it means to be human, he apologetically adds: ‘My philosophy is admittedly rather obscure, though clear and easy to understand when one has heard it explained.’⁶⁶ In the *Ethics*, he admits that ‘the vulgar call us insane, holding that this business of self-inspection leads to stark raving madness, not to wisdom.’⁶⁷ At times, his own annotations conflict with the main text of his work.⁶⁸

Yet it is exactly for its acceptance of the paradoxes of human psychology that Geulincx’ *Ethics* remains invaluable. If his conclusions were premature, it was not because of eccentricity or hastiness. It was rather the result of overconfidence. The intuition Geulincx shared with other ‘occasionalist’ Cartesians, was that the allocation of functions between the human will and its neurological input would somehow lead to a new understanding of the conflicts of human psychology

⁶⁵ See below, 62.

⁶⁶ Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, ‘Decima Scientia’, 1st Annotation to p. 154, in *Opera* II, 270–271. Translation from *Metaphysics*, 42–43.

⁶⁷ See below, 287, Annotation 11.

⁶⁸ The ‘complete foundation for Ethics’, for instance, that he formulated in his own commentary on the passage on taking care of one’s body and race, is in fact a third axiom that neutralises his official axiom that says ‘Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will.’ Cf. below, 268–269, Annotation 20.

and human behaviour. Where Geulincx thought he had solved all problems, philosophers and scientists are still searching for answers today.

In the unrelenting flow of ideas and theories put forward in man's quest for happiness, Geulincx' view that we should not hunt happiness in order to acquire it offers an unruly voice of dissent. At the same time, it is a view backed by various claims in modern biology. At least since Hobbes, controversies over man's natural egoism have continued to surface in Western philosophy and science. What Geulincx' *Ethics* makes clear is that consciousness itself interferes with the right answers to questions of egoism versus altruism. In his book on *The Origins of Virtue*, Matt Ridley relates how experiments by economist Robert Frank and others have confirmed that 'students who have been taught the nostrums of neo-classical economics are much more likely to defect in prisoner's dilemma games' than others. In other words, despite the fact that biological and economic studies have clearly recognized selfishness in human behaviour, it is quite something else to teach it, or to regard selfishness as a viable motive or intention for human beings. If people are not 'rational maximizers of self-interest,' Ridley argues, then to teach them that a maximization of self-interest 'would be logical' is 'to corrupt them.'⁶⁹

It is here that biology, economics and theology meet. For a similar dilemma was expressed by Cardinal Newman in 1842, be it in very different terms:

Again: virtue is its own reward, and brings with it the truest and highest pleasures; but they who cultivate it for the pleasure-sake are selfish, not religious, and will never gain the pleasure, because they never can have the virtue.⁷⁰

Geulincx' point could hardly be stated more clearly. A full scientific explanation of the way in which our biological and emotional selves cause social behaviour is still beyond our reach. Yet whether we are guided by divine grace or by our genetic make-up, it is clear that we are sometimes better off without an awareness of self-care.

⁶⁹ Matt Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue. Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation*, London: Penguin, 1996/New York: Penguin, 1997, 145–146.

⁷⁰ John Henry Newman, 'Sanctity the Token of the Christian Empire', Sermon 17, 4 December 1842, in *Sermons Bearing on Subjects of the Day*, London: Rivingtons, 1869/London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1909, 245.

Even less understood is what type of insight into one's personality is psychologically rewarding. If Descartes' project of linking consciousness to biology and neuroscience is re-enacted in the work of philosophers like Daniel Dennett, it is up to the likes of Geulincx to try and rethink what moral philosophy would best fit our new concepts today. Future theories of consciousness may lead to notions of the self that conflict even more than Geulincx' views with the certainties of introspection. Future theories of ethics will preferably do even more justice to the more basic aspects of human life, instead of squarely expressing themselves in favour of the mental superstructure of social and cultural programming. Whatever we find out about the tensions between our natural and cultural roles and our social and individual horizons, we shall be pursuing a project our seventeenth-century Cartesians left unfinished.

HvR

ON THIS EDITION

How to present a posthumous work left unfinished at the time of the author's death and reworked and re-edited by others? Recording Mozart's *Requiem* in 1997, the Flemish conductor Philippe Herreweghe decided to stick to the Süßmayr version instead of following one of the various alternatives that had recently been presented by others. There are of course stylistic arguments for and against such a decision, as well as dilemmas of interpretation to be decided on historical grounds. Yet the most pressing argument for Herreweghe seems to have been the fact that Süßmayr's version was the one tradition has passed down to us as 'Mozart's *Requiem*'.

A similar argument may be made for J.P.N. Land's 1893 version of Geulincx' *Ethics*, which we have chosen to follow in this first English edition. Land's text has been the standard for over a century now and has been given a wide diffusion since Herman de Vleeschauwer had it reprinted in 1968. Compared to the few remaining seventeenth and early eighteenth-century editions, Land's version is the only serious candidate for a 'traditional' version of Geulincx' *Ethics*. It is in a sense a harmless candidate, too, in that there is still an easy possibility to check the interventions Land made in Johannes Flenderus' text, his own copy of which is kept in the manuscript vault at Leiden University Library under number 759 G 43. Where needed, we have consulted this copy as well as other editions, such as Anton de Reus' Dutch translation *Ethica of Zedenkonst* (1690), which is based on the original *Philaretus* edition of 1675 and is available at the Free University of Amsterdam under XG.05673.

How did Geulincx' book develop? Having reworked the *Disputatio ethica de Virtute et primis ejus proprietatibus* of 26 April 1664 into a full treatise that was published in 1665 as a 'First Treatise of Ethics' *De Virtute et Primis eius Proprietatibus, Quae vulgo virtutes cardinales vocantur*, Geulincx decided to rewrite the text himself for a Dutch edition. It appeared as *Van de Hoofst-deuchden. De eerste Tucht-verhandeling* in 1667, the year in which its author had been officially appointed *professor extraordinarius in morali philosophia*. Geulincx obviously continued to lecture on Treatise I whilst he was working on the remaining parts of

his book. As is the case in his two unfinished books on metaphysics, the *Metaphysica Vera* and the *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, the text of the *Ethics* has been passed down to us together with a flood of annotations. In the first edition of 1675, the printer explained that two sorts of notes had been added, numbered notes *ad interpretationem textus*, ‘for a better understanding of the text,’ and footnotes with references in the form of letters, which were not directly based on the author’s notes to the text, but were extracted from the Dutch edition of 1667 by Geulincx’ first editor Cornelis Bontekoe.¹ These extra notes were not included in the Land edition and are equally left out here.

While lecturing on the published text of Treatise I, Geulincx worked on other parts of his intended *Ethics* and organised a series of disputations *De finibus bonorum et malorum seu de Summo bono* on Cicero’s *De finibus*.² Annotations to books 2 to 6 of the *Ethics* are scarce, however, so that it may be doubted whether Geulincx actually lectured on these or lectured on them more than once. A manuscript in Leiden University Library (BPL 1255) consists of carefully worked out lecture notes on which the division of Geulincx’ works is based. Flenderus’s edition of 1696 sometimes follows this handwritten text more closely than Bontekoe’s edition of 1675, but neither Flenderus nor Bontekoe kept to this manuscript as strictly as Land, who deleted passages from the former editions if they were not documented in this unique set of lecture notes. As we learn from the printer’s preface to Flenderus’ edition, seventeenth-century editors still had various manuscripts to chose from. No autograph, however, was ever at hand.

ANNOTATIONS AND EDITORS’ NOTES

Numbered notes in the main text of the *Ethics* refer to Geulincx’ Annotations, which are found on pages 167–300, below. Numbered notes in the text of the Annotations are also by Geulincx and occur as footnotes, placed above the footnote separator on the same page.

¹ Arnold Geulincx, *Gnôthi Seauton, Sive Ethica*, ed. Philarethus [Cornelis Bontekoe], Leiden: A. Severini, 1675/Amsterdam: Jansenio-Waesbergii, 1691, ‘Typographi Lectori S[alutem]’, s.p.

² Cf. *Opera* III, 283–360.

All notes bearing asterisks, daggers, etc. (*, †, ‡, §, **), are the editors' notes. They appear at the bottom of the page, below the footnote separator.

All footnotes to Samuel Beckett's text are notes made by the editors.

ETHICS

TO THE CURATORS OF THE UNIVERSITY
OF LEIDEN*

Most noble and most generous Sirs,

It is now a year or two since I chose to make my abode in the Republic of Letters (whose ministers you are), where under your auspices I might lay the foundations of a new house for Ancient Wisdom. To this end, I brought into the world for you two Books on Logic, one of which furnishes the piles and rubble for solidifying and levelling the ground, the other the clay and cement with which to harden and bind them together. They have faithfully and precisely done what I demanded of them: they have applied the rammers, they have covered the soil with a layer of hardcore, and they have joined together the hardcore and the blocks with an unbreakable bond. Laid out here before you are the foundations of an Encyclopaedia.

But in the meantime, leaving these foundations alone, in order to see whether they gaped open or fell away somewhere, or whether they stood firm and would bear their load (and certainly, though I say so myself, they have so far performed well, and give promise that they will bear till the end of time the weight of whatever may be erected on them, however elaborate and majestic), I made ready, tooled, and trimmed certain materials that might be of use in the construction, namely, columns, beams, and floorboards. At length, weary of my unremitting labours, I decided to put aside and postpone them for the time being, addressing myself to a more congenial task: to set about fashioning the Cornice of the future building; and having formed some notion of this, and even committed it to the drawing-board, I now paint, carve, and engrave it all day long.

* The first presentation of Geulincx' moral philosophy was the *Disputatio ethica de Virtute et primis ejus proprietatibus* of 26 April 1664. A year later, Treatise I of the *Ethics* was published as *De Virtute et Primis eius Proprietatibus, Quae vulgo virtutes cardinales vocantur, Tractatus Ethicus primus*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1665. Its dedication to the Curators and its Address to the Gracious Reader were later reproduced in posthumous editions of the *Ethics*. Both texts are also included here. Geulincx himself published a revised Dutch version of *De Virtute* in 1667 as *Van de Hooft-deuchden. De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667.

This Cornice is the Study of *Virtue and its Prime Attributes*, which occupies the pinnacle of the Temple of Wisdom. For the roof of this Temple is Ethics. And what of Politics? It is but an arch in this roof. Those for whom the welfare of a Commonwealth depends on something other than this virtuous firmament (I mean, the roof of this Temple) are a world away from the truth. He who has suspended the lantern of his counsels from human subtlety often glitters for a little while: the puerile admire him, and toadies flatter; but soon, snuffed out and guttering amidst smoke and stench, he crashes down onto the onlookers, showering them with his innards, and bruising their noddles. Experience, the dominatrix of fools, teaches it all too well with a spiky rod, today as of yore.

In the Temple of Wisdom, therefore, Ethics is the ceiling and the roof. With Logic the foundation is firm and compact; with Mathematics and Metaphysics the columns are sturdy, and the walls well timbered; with Physics the floorboards and plumbing are all neatly and elegantly fitted; but without Ethics the Temple will never be in good repair. In fact, without Ethics it will be not a Temple but an open pool, unworthy of holy things and sacred rites. Peeling plaster and festering mould, obscene nests of screech-owls and little-owls, the haunt of wild beasts, a mass of scaly snakes and worms, dreadful and detestable, it will be gradually leached away by raindrops, threatening injury to passers-by until finally it falls to ruin, more wretched than all the hovels of unknowing and ignorance.

The roof of the Temple of Philosophy being Ethics, that Treatise which deals most closely with Virtue itself is the apex and Cornice of that roof, which, now dedicated to you, now distinguished by your patronage, now duly constructed and fitted, I offer and submit to you for your close examination as being worthy of your regard. If you require anything in the workmanship to be changed (for there is nothing in the material that requires to be changed, on my faith it is all solid and sound), you have the right so to order (you are my masters), it will be for me to carry out your orders, and wherever you may decide that the vines and clusters of my carved work should be gilded, I will assuredly see to it that my art shines out the better for your munificence, and that your munificence gleams for ever in my art. Farewell. Be well-disposed to good and worthy men. May God be likewise well-disposed to you, to your Commonwealth of

Letters, and to the General Good. If you are well-disposed, He will be well-disposed. I remain, most noble, most generous, and most learned sirs, your most obedient servant,

ARNOLD GEULINCX

(given at Leiden, 27th July, 1665)

GRACIOUS READER,*

This is a Book on the *Cardinal Virtues*.¹ I have taken its Name (fittingly) from the vulgar, the Matter I have borrowed from Nature (as befitted a Philosopher). For the Virtues as reckoned by me are not the same as those reckoned by the vulgar. According to the vulgar, they are Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance; but for me they are Diligence, Justice, Obedience, and Humility. Prudence is manifestly out of place here (several Philosophers before me have observed that): it is a fruit and an adminicle of Virtue, not a virtue itself. There is agreement among us about Justice, so doubt remains only about Fortitude and Temperance. But these can be absent from the exercise of Virtue, perhaps not at the same time, but each in its turn; for amidst adversities there is no room for Temperance, amidst favourable things there is no room for Fortitude. (Nor do I pay any attention to those who say that it is Fortitude not to succumb to temptations amidst favourable things, and Temperance not to be too fearful amidst adversities: these are just laboured *Analogies*, and do not sufficiently distinguish literal from figurative speech; for *not to succumb* means no more than *not to be enticed*, which is only Temperance, and *not to be too fearful* means no more than *not to be terrified*, which is only Fortitude.)[†] But there can be no true exercise of Virtue without the four virtues that I have taken as *Cardinal*. In order for any action to be right, one must listen to Reason (this is Diligence), do what Reason says (this is Obedience), do neither more nor less than that (this is Justice), and not do it for one's own sake (this is Humility). These Properties are therefore inseparable from the exercise of Virtue, and for us to do well any work of Virtue, we must be *diligent, obedient, just, and humble* in the doing of it.

And just as I receive these things from Nature (as I said), so I also accept and treat of them naturally. I intermix with them nothing from sacred sources; everything comes from Reason, whatever rivulet of it is present. Hence, during the writing I often marvelled,

* This Address is taken from the 1665 edition of *De Virtute et Primis ejus proprietatibus*. See the footnote to the dedicatory letter to the Curators, above.

† Also see below, 296–297.

and marvel again now,² at how our pagans (not, of course adherents of the same Religion as us, but nevertheless adherents of the same Reason), while displaying such great ingenuity, such great spirit, such great study and care, went so utterly astray; and did so on such level ground, and by such a right royal highway, when they had the advantage of that divine Oracle whose praises they never tired of singing: *Know thyself*. If they had made proper use of this thread, they would have been able not only to travel those highways more easily, but even, if matters had so fallen out, to negotiate the inexplicable Labyrinth. But self-love seduced them all; and here I excuse no-one, not even great Plato, who (I admit) deserved to be excused, if any of them deserved to be excused. With might and main they strove one and all for the *Blessed Life*, and laboured over their happiness and their desire for happiness: hence those tears. Christians alone here are wise in some respects by virtue of their Religion; alone, but how few among even them! The Scholastic moralists, with their pagan masters, whose dogmas they profess, are unsound; the Vulgar likewise, as they mostly frequent the teachers and rhetoricians whom the Scholastics have formed.

And indeed, the Christians who are wise here are wise (as I said) by virtue of their Religion. No-one else, as far as I know, has acted the Philosopher here and hit the nail on the head of Natural Reason pure and simple (for this, to me, is to philosophise). Why is that? Am I someone uniquely more subtle than all these pagans and Christians alike? I am not so childishly affected as to claim that much for myself. But what happens with those who gaze upon Atoms with the aid of the Microscope (a wonderful and miraculous invention of our time and of our Netherlands)—for the tiniest specks that have almost evaded the naked eye come into view with the aid of this instrument as true bodies, so that what could never otherwise be seen, their diverse parts, colours, angles, hollows, and swellings, can now easily be seen; but, what is also most remarkable, the Microscope being withdrawn after having been applied for a little while, they are able to discern and distinguish with their eyes alone things that they would never have seen at all if they had not first seen them with the aid of the instrument, their naked eyes now able to penetrate the mysteries of the dust that formerly would not even have shown up without a magnifying-glass—happens also with me. The Word of God is my Dutch Tube, and what I have seen with its aid, and would not have seen without it, I also see in some

measure without its aid; in fact, I still see such things well enough without the Tube later, and as perfectly as if I were still equipped with it. It is not that I rate my own eyes above the sharp and acute eyes of our pagans: to be sure, their eyes saw less, but that was because they lacked my little glass. But I exhort those Christians (few as they are) who have perceived these things through their Religion to recall them to mind here with me. It helps; as those who make use of Microscopes teach us.

Lastly, Reader, be a constant reader here. And what you read in my Book, re-read in your mind. Make no mistake: it is written there also.

TREATISE I
ON VIRTUE
AND ITS PRIME ATTRIBUTES, WHICH ARE
COMMONLY CALLED CARDINAL VIRTUES

CHAPTER I
On Virtue in general

Ethics is concerned with Virtue. Virtue is the exclusive Love of right Reason.

§ 1. *Love*

[1] *Love* has a variety of meanings;¹ and first of all, it signifies a certain *Affect*, or *passion*, which caresses the human mind, and fills it with tenderness. In fact, this *passion*, which is widely called *Love*, is the entire, exclusive, and sole² delight of the human mind, insofar as it is human and joined to a body. For even though the human mind, insofar as it is a mind, is capable of more elevated pleasures (such as the mere approbation of its own actions, when they accord with Divine Law), nevertheless, insofar as it is joined to a body, and born to act on it, and in turn to receive something from it, and as it were be acted upon by it, it knows no other tenderness than *passion*. Hence, *Joy*, *Delights*, *Merriment*, *Laughter*, *Rejoicing*, *Jubilation*, and the like, are only diverse names for Love. What is tender in Desire, Hope, Trust, and the like, and positively affects and calms the mind, is indeed Love;³ but what troubles and afflicts the mind, is not Love but some other affection that is involved with them at the same time as Love. Now the pleasure of a mind separated and withdrawing itself from the body (which, as I have said, consists in the bare approbation of its own actions, inasmuch as they assent to Divine Law) seems for the most part so meagre,⁴ so tenuous and rarefied, that men hardly or not at all consider it to be worthy of the name of Pleasure. And when this spiritual delight is sterile, and does not produce⁵ the corporeal and sensible pleasure (passionate Love) which in

other cases it usually does produce, they complain that they have to live a life of sorrow and austerity, that they are wasting away, and that for all that they obey God and Reason, they are destitute of all reward and consolation.

[2] And so it is clear enough why Love is a *passion*. But such Love cannot be accepted as forming part of the definition of Virtue.⁶ Although this kind of Love often accompanies Virtue (for virtuous men are often rich in the unfailing delights and pleasures of the mind), it is still not Virtue itself, but only an incidental reward of Virtue, and as often absent from Virtue as accompanying it. Therefore, the Love that constitutes Virtue is of another kind, namely, a firm intention⁷ of doing what Right Reason has decided ought to be done. And because this Love looks to some outcome, it can be called *Effective Love*; just as the first kind of Love, which I dealt with a little earlier, can be called *Affective Love*. And Effective Love includes not only a firm intention of doing what Reason determines ought to be done; but in general every firm intention to act.⁸ Even a firm intention of pursuing and avenging your injuries is also Love; not, to be sure, towards him on whom you have determined to avenge yourself and punish, but towards yourself, whom you wish by means of that revenge to pacify, placate, restore, and delight. Hence, Affective Love is any tenderness whatever in the human mind; but Effective Love is a firm intention to act.

[3] Affective love is much the more common, and indeed it is well-known that the vulgar understand nothing else by the word *Love*; but more properly and more naturally it signifies Effective Love.⁹ In fact, Affective Love seems to go by the name of *Love* for no other reason than that it often gives rise to Effective Love. But we usually understand when we are not greatly loved by one whom we know to be positively affected towards us, but whose affection does not give rise to an effect,¹⁰ and who does not assist us, or stand out or exert himself on our behalf when the occasion presents itself; and we certainly do not set great store by such Love. Plainly, then, *Love* should more properly and more naturally signify Effective Love than Affective Love.

[4] Since people commonly understand by the word *Love* little else but affective Love, that is, the *passion* that I discussed in [1],¹¹ they also attribute the whole nature of Virtue to that passion, and believe

themselves to have attained Virtue when they feel themselves borne up towards God and Reason by some tender affection. But when they find themselves lacking in such affection (which naturally happens),¹² they are as distressed and surprised as if they had suffered a certain and indubitable loss of Virtue. They can be freed from these anxieties and troubles only by learning to be truly humble;¹³ and this should be their watchword: to do or omit to do nothing for the sake of their own amusement and comfort, but to do or omit to do everything out of consideration for Reason alone. However, it is futile for anyone to wish to expel such anxieties straightaway.¹⁴ This will emerge more clearly from what I have to say in Chapter II, where I treat of Humility.

[5] These two kinds of Love (Affective and Effective) are very often found together; with Affective Love sometimes generating Effective Love, sometimes the reverse. In society, Affective Love often generates Effective Love. For on the one hand, those who court and covet some benefit, busy themselves with entering into the good graces of those by whose favour they hope to be able to obtain it, and attempt to earn their affection with blandishments, complaisances, services, gifts, and if all else fails, entreaties. They are quite sure that if they can win this Affective Love for themselves,¹⁵ Effective Love, or an intention to confer benefits, will almost certainly be born of it, and with it the benefits that they covet. On the other hand, it is equally often the case that Effective Love generates Affective Love. This happens in more elevated forms of social contact, as when some good and true Philosopher perceives one of his disciples (for example Socrates perceiving Plato) to be imbued with Wisdom.¹⁶ Socrates began by seeking to confer benefits on Plato, to instruct him well, and make him like himself, that is, to make him good (than which there can be no higher intention of benefiting anyone). Out of this intention there arose in Socrates a tender affection towards Plato, namely, that tenderness of mind with which when we are attracted to others, we are said to love them. The same holds of the exercise of Virtue. Men of virtue are not at first affected tenderly and pleasantly towards God and Reason, and then moved to obey God and Reason (for this is an illegitimate process, and not without vice, as we shall see later on when I treat of the passions*); but on the contrary, they

* See below, 109–119, esp. 116–118; and 299.

first wish steadfastly to obey God and Reason, from which there naturally springs forth¹⁷ in them an affection for God and Reason, and a tenderness of mind which is generally called *Love*, and in this particular connection, *Devotion*.

[6] Furthermore, there are also two kinds of Effective Love, namely, *Benevolent Love* and *Concupiscent Love*. Benevolent Love is a firm intention of benefiting another. But Virtue does not consist of this kind of Love either; for Virtue is the Love of Reason, and we cannot do either good or ill to Reason. When we do well, we neither sow nor reap anything of it, and nothing is lost to it when we do ill. This is because Reason is an image of the divine that we have within ourselves, and consequently, inasmuch as it is a divine image (and to that extent loveable), it can no more receive good or ill from us than God Himself.¹⁸ Thus, if you conduct yourself moderately, if you conduct yourself resolutely, you indeed temper yourself to Reason, but this is for your own good, and it benefits you, not Reason; but if you act petulantly or faint-heartedly, this is a reproach to you as one who will not listen to Reason. Your own stains cannot besmirch Reason itself.¹⁹ We commend a mirror that reflects true images of things, and discommend one that reflects false and distorted images; but no-one believes the things reflected in the mirror to be either commendable or discommendable on that account.²⁰

[7] Concupiscent Love is nothing other than the firm intention of pursuing something; of such sort is the love of men²¹ for riches, honours, pleasures, and so on, which men busy themselves pursuing; whence it is nothing other than Self-Love or Philautia. This kind of Love is far removed from the nature of Virtue; for it is the tinder of Sin, or rather Sin its very own self; as will emerge more clearly later on,²² when we come to deal with Sin. In fact, he who elevates his gaze to Reason ought to turn away from his own interest as much as possible.²³ On the highway of Virtue such reasonings are obstacles set in his path; he has to turn his back on them. Anyone who sets out on that admirable path does so with open arms. And there is no more certain touchstone with which we can distinguish those splendidly dishonest men who simulate Virtue with such cunning, than the use of that sorry little word that with them is frequently on their lips and ever in their minds: *Mine*. Anyone who is preoccupied with himself, and busy about his own affairs is revealed

by its use as a hypocrite, however airily he may chatter about Virtue, or dispute about it with an appearance of knowledge and expertise.²⁴

[8] These, then, are the three kinds of Love which I have so far had occasion to mention (that is, Affective Love, and the two kinds of Effective Love, namely Benevolent and Concupiscent). The Scholastics also had a good deal to say about these three Loves; but, as we have seen, they are outside the scope of Virtue, and do not belong to its nature or essence. There remains yet a fourth kind of Love, to which the Scholastics, as far as I can judge, paid little attention; but which in fact is another kind of Effective Love that can be called *Obedient Love*. This is nothing other than a firm intention of obeying the orders of another. And with this Love we finally arrive at the nature of Virtue;²⁵ for the way in which we ought to love Reason (the love of which constitutes Virtue) is to have a firm intention of doing whatever Reason dictates.

§ 2. *Reason*

[1] What Reason *is* must not be stated, in fact cannot be stated (see my *Logic**). Nevertheless, I maintain that it is sufficiently well known to all of us,¹ as we have the distinction of being rational.² It does not matter that Reason is so often ignored, obscure, and a source of perplexity: it is enough that we are familiar with Reason in some circumstances at least,³ for it not to be entirely unknown. A son can still be said to know his father even though he might not be able to recognise him from a distance, in the dark, in a dense crowd of people milling about, in fancy dress, or dressed as a woman.⁴ But this is not the place to discuss these matters at any greater length, and I must refer you to my *Logic*, as I said earlier. I now return to the matter in hand.

[2] Virtue is the Love of Reason, and not strictly speaking, or at least not so precisely speaking, the Love of God as He is in Himself.⁵

* In Part 4, Section 2, Chapter 9 of the *Logica fundamentis suis restituta* (1662), it is argued that “Reason illuminates (*illustrat*)” and that there is no reason for this fact, just as there is no reason for the fact that “light illuminates”. Cf. *Opera* I, 437–438.

After all, we necessarily obey God whatever we do or fail to do; otherwise how can God be said to be in a state of blessedness (as He necessarily is) if someone has the power to resist His will, if something happens against His wishes? To have to endure something we dislike is the epitome of unhappiness; and we are all distressed when something happens, or simply is the case, in some other way than we wish. Hence, an Intention of obeying God as He is in Himself, and apart from Reason,⁶ is as pointless as intending to arrange for a hill to have a vale, or for the angles of a triangle to add up to two right-angles. To wish to obey the absolute, true, and strict will of God in some matter, is to wish what has already been done;⁷ whether you like it or not, you will obey, just as all things will necessarily obey. (But here is not the place to speak of why this does not make God the author of Sin,⁸ and of how it is consistent with our freedom of will⁹). So long as it is considered apart from the objections and sophistries that the Scholastics are accustomed to bring against it, nothing can be thought more clearly than this Truth, that *All men, in fact all things, necessarily behave in accordance with God's wishes.*¹⁰ The only difference is that some men are obedient to the Law that God has given us, that is, Reason, and they are said to be *Men of Virtue*; while other men refuse to obey the Law, and these are the *Wicked*.

[3] Virtue is also the Love of *right* Reason. To love corrupted Reason is not Virtue. And Reason, when we turn to natural and physical things, is corrupted by prejudices and fallacies; and when we turn to moral and Ethical things¹¹ it is corrupted not only by those just mentioned, but also by desires and passions. Hence it is plain that corrupted Reason is not really Reason; for just as impure gold is not really gold, but gold and dross, so corrupt Reason is not really Reason, but Reason alloyed with prejudices, fallacies, desires, and affects. Accordingly, it was not strictly necessary for me to add the qualification *right* to the Definition of Virtue, because it is implied when we speak of Reason; just as when *gold* is mentioned, *pure* is implied.

[4] I said also that Virtue is the *exclusive*¹² Love of Reason. For Virtue admits Reason alone, is worthy to have Reason alone in its fold and embrace, every other consideration being excluded. Hence, those who steer a course partly by Reason, partly by convenience, pleasure, or fame, steer an ill course, and not according to Reason's

compass; because nothing accords with Reason unless the whole of it, however extensive it is, accords with Reason. One of Reason's precepts is this: *Beyond God and Reason, all things must be despised*; hence, no-one can love Reason unless he loves Reason alone. Therefore, the qualification *exclusive* is also equally implied, and Virtue can now more concisely be defined as the *Love of Reason*. For because this Love has to be obedient Love, exclusive Love, and Love of right Reason, not corrupted Reason, the simple notion of Reason is sufficient to convey it.

§ 3. *Disposition**

[1] Aristotelians and Scholastics would have Virtue to be a *disposition to act rightly, acquired by the frequent performance of good actions*;¹ but they have got things out of order,² as Virtue is prior to this virtue of theirs.[†] For where do good actions come from? Plainly, from nowhere other than Virtue.³ Therefore, Virtue is prior to good actions: how much more, then, will it be prior to the disposition that emanates from the frequency of good actions. Add to this that the facility acquired through good actions should really be called *felicity*, as it is more a reward of Virtue than Virtue itself. Add to this also that, because it is merely a natural thing, engendered as a matter of course by its natural progenitor, it has no commerce with moral things.

[2] But to believe that Virtue consists in a disposition, and that one can be virtuous even when one is asleep, or when one's mind is wandering and one is doing something else, is very bad, and smells of Scholasticism. Moral questions should be discussed morally,⁴ and not with the aid of such subtleties. Of course, it is obvious that a rich man can still be said to be rich when he travels abroad and leaves his wealth behind at home, for when he returns he will still have it at his disposal. Likewise, a good man, when he sleeps or drowns, is still called good, because when he eventually does something he will resume that intention which is the sole reason why he

* The term *disposition* is here chosen as the translation for *habitus*, which is the technical Latin term for the Greek concept of *hexis*. According to Aristotle, virtue is not to be found in a certain act, or in a property of an act, but in a disposition, or *hexis*, to act in the right way.

† Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* II 1, and the definition of *aretê* at 1106 b 38.

is accounted good. But though he resumes his intention, he is good not out of being disposed to this intention, but on account of the intention itself. It is like snow, which has a disposition to be white,⁵ but is called *white* not on account of this disposition but on account of the whiteness itself, even though such habit and disposition may be requisite for it to be plainly called white. For if it were alternately white and non-white in some capricious manner, it could not be said to be more white than non-white. Likewise, even though being disposed to a good intention and to good actions may be required⁶ for one to pass among men as good, one is still not good by reason of such habit and disposition; and so habit and disposition are not Virtue itself.

[3] But even though we do not allow anyone to rejoice in the reputation of being a virtuous man⁷ unless he usually behaves well, someone who was never good before can suddenly become absolutely good right now, by immediately turning towards Reason a mind that was turned away from Reason, and ensuring that from now on he does not indulge his passions,⁸ but tempers his mind to Reason alone. And since no-one may be good save through Virtue, it follows that Virtue is not a disposition to act well, inasmuch as no-one will have it by merely being prepared for its use and exercise. And we observe that Preachers of all Christian Churches are always impressing on their congregations that good works are to be done not out of disposition or habit,⁹ but out of Love for God, or (as they prefer to say) out of charity; whereby they testify abundantly that Virtue does not lie in disposition or habit, for if a habit could be Virtue, any action that might proceed from such a habit would be right.

[4] Of course, in one who has acquired Virtue all at once we always find something akin to use, habit, and facility.¹⁰ Since he loves Reason (Virtue being a kind of Love, as was explained in § 1), he also despises and overcomes the difficulties that rise up against Reason. But to disdain difficulties is akin to facility; and so it seems to people that anyone who overcomes difficulties through strength of character overcomes them with facility. But the wise man discerns even here a wide distinction between Habit and Love. Habit has a thick hide, it does not feel discomfort; Love is tender, and feels discomforts acutely even as it tramples on them, thrusts them aside, and wins the victory over them. Thus, Disposition may be a happier state of mind, but Love is far nobler.

CHAPTER II

On the Cardinal virtues

The Cardinal Virtues are the attributes of Virtue that proceed from it most closely and immediately,¹ without reference to any particular external circumstances.² They comprise these four: *Diligence*, *Obedience*, *Justice*, and *Humility*.

SECTION I

§ 1. *Diligence*

[1] And Diligence is indeed the firstborn of Virtue,³ or the Love of Reason. Since the whole nature of Reason⁴ is to dictate, to prescribe, and to suggest, it is clear that no-one can rightly love Reason if he does not listen to it, apply his mind's ear to it, and direct his whole mind to what it dictates.⁵ This direction of the mind towards Reason, this fixed and profound attention to Reason, I call *Diligence*, which is accordingly an intense and continuous withdrawal of the mind (no matter what its current business) from external things into itself, into its own innermost sanctum, in order to consult the sacred Oracle of Reason.

[2] It is clear from the definition that Diligence may be divided into two parts, *Aversion* and *Introversion*. By Aversion I mean the turning away of the mind from the distraction of external and sensible things,⁶ for in meeting these the mind may be disturbed and prevented from listening; and by Introversion the turning of the mind into itself. For in there, and nowhere else, can one grasp what Reason says and teaches.⁷ The writings and teaching of wise men may bring Reason to the attention of our eyes and ears, but only inwardly and in the recesses of the mind can we perceive it. In fact (unless we are negligent or would rather be otherwise engaged) we summon for examination whatever reasonings come to us from without into that interior and lively theatre of Reason that lies within us,⁸ and apply to them that touchstone with which we may determine which of them should be received, and which rejected. For there is nothing that is so great, sublime, and holy that it should be exempt from

examination by Reason. Even if there are things that exceed the scope of Reason and should not be weighed on Reason's scales, how else could we have ascertained this fact except by the testimony of Reason? To this extent, even these things have presented themselves for examination.

[3] This will be the Adminicle of Diligence, that over and over again we revolve in our mind, repeat, and ruminat⁹ on the things in which from time to time Truth and Reason have enlightened us. With such continual familiarity with Reason's embrace, we shall at last be able to pursue it wherever it seems to take refuge from the conceptual power of our understanding. The members of your household and your servants soon learn to recognise you without difficulty and at first sight, even in dim light or in strange clothing; neighbours not quite so quickly; and with much greater difficulty, or not at all, people who are seldom in your company. Likewise, someone who keeps company with Reason only in some particular spot (which is very easy when Reason is clearly on view) is then able to apprehend it and bring it to light¹⁰ even when it hides itself with such cunning that one might suppose it had sunk into the bottomless well of Democritus. In truth, anyone who thinks Reason of no account and despises it¹¹ when it is plentiful will never enjoy its fruits when it is hard to find and valued. And just as men hold Reason of no account where it is plentiful, because superabundance of it is easily obtained, so Reason holds men of no account where it is hard to find and abstruse. But when Reason is valued it marries itself most faithfully to those whom it did not displease when it was held of no account.¹² Hence, if at an age when we judge them to be unsuited for moral instruction we would wish to infuse callow youth with true and genuine Virtue,¹³ we cannot do better than to advise them to apply themselves first to those disciplines in which only Reason and Demonstration are in order, such as Geometry, Arithmetic, and the like.¹⁴ But for what I have to say about the value of these disciplines, be good enough to consult my *Quaestiones Quodlibeticae*.*

* Geulincx must have in mind the proposals for improving the university curriculum that he gave on the occasion of his academic Oratio in Leuven on 14 December 1652. The lecture was published in his *Quaestiones quodlibeticae in utramque partem disputatae* (Antwerp, 1653) and later re-edited for publication in his *Saturnalia* (Leiden, 1665; 1669²). Cf. *Opera* I, 41–42.

[4] The Fruit of Diligence is Wisdom,¹⁵ which is nothing other than a right understanding of what Reason has said; and there can be no doubt that it arises naturally from due attention to Reason. How will you know what Reason says, if you do not listen when Reason speaks?¹⁶ But if you listen, then you will be diligent, then you will also easily understand what Reason says, and you will be wise. In Ethics or Morals, Wisdom changes its name, and is called *Prudence*,¹⁷ since it is prudent to be wise in everything that makes for Virtue; while in Physics or Natural Philosophy Wisdom simply retains the name of *Wisdom*. But even in this case one could make an important distinction by calling it *Speculative Wisdom*.

[5] But wait, Philaretus,¹⁸ a difficulty rears its head: from what kind of Diligence can this *Speculative Wisdom* arise?¹⁹ Admittedly, this is still not the source of the difficulty, as you will readily respond that *Speculative Wisdom* arises out of Diligence, or attention to Reason, since Natural Philosophy also involves Reason. But where does this Diligence come from? Out of what sort of Love of Reason? And this is the source of the difficulty. For this kind of Diligence does not appear to arise out of an Obedient Love of Reason, as such a Love has no place with things that are subjects of pure speculation, such as Physics. It does not even arise out of an Affective Love of Reason, because what arises out of that kind of Love is Sin,²⁰ and pertains to Intemperance, as I shall demonstrate elsewhere. But why should *Speculative Wisdom* be put under the heading of Sin? Wisdom whose full sister is a true offspring of Virtue,²¹

—*great progeny of Jove*,*

as the poet says? But neither can the Diligence that is concerned with Theoretical matters be the offspring of some other kind of Effective Love of Reason, such as Benevolent or Concupiscent Love, because (Chapter I § 1 [6]–[7]) these Loves are not consonant with Reason. Thus, taking everything into account, I maintain that the Diligence which engenders *Speculative Wisdom* naturally arises out of Virtue; that is, from Obedient Love of Reason. Virtuous men (who alone are wise²²) attend to Reason in Physics in order to become better acquainted with it (which can also be gathered from what I

* Virgil, *Eclogues* IV, 49.

said just now in [3]), and better and readier to follow its dictates in Ethics. But to be led into speculation by some other kind of Love (being seduced by the sheer pleasure of speculation) is a sort of vanity and intemperance, which will never bring forth solid and genuine Wisdom,²³ but only spurious and inane Wisdom, spouting opinions, suspicions, fevers, dreams, errors, and futile subtleties. All this will become clearer when we come to consider the Reward of Virtue. Therefore, although we cannot in Theoretical matters love Reason with a Love such as will induce us to obey it in those matters, we can still love it in those matters with a Love such as will induce us to obey it in other matters, namely in Practical and Moral matters. For the Reason that discloses to us the truths of Physics is the same Reason that enjoins on us Ethics.²⁴

§ 2. *Obedience*

[1] The second property of Virtue is *Obedience*. Love of Reason having led you to Diligence, Diligence in turn will make you a hearer of Reason, and by hearing it, you will learn the precepts of Diligence (which are those of Wisdom and Prudence). Led on by that same Love of Reason, it remains for you to follow those precepts, whatever they may be (which is the function of Obedience). For it cannot be that you love Reason, and understand what Reason wants you to do, but that when the occasion arises you would not do it. Further, even though Obedience is born out of Virtue after Diligence, in fact even after Prudence, it is still born directly out of Virtue,¹ as anyone who is truly obedient is moved to follow Reason's precepts by Virtue, that is, Love of Reason. It is different with Prudence, which is also born out of Virtue, but indirectly, that is, with Diligence as intermediary. Thus, Diligence and Obedience are the daughters of Virtue, the latter younger by birth, the former elder; but Wisdom and Prudence are grand-daughters of Virtue, as they are born directly out of Diligence, but not directly out of Virtue.

[2] Obedience has two parts: To Do and Not To Do: not to do what Reason forbids, to do what Reason dictates. In Physics there is but one simple precept: *to demonstrate*. In Morals there are two:² *to prescribe*, and *to forbid*. Obedience has strictly speaking no place in Physics, for although we may perceive what Reason demonstrates

there, it is not Obedience to perceive it. On the other hand, if you perceive and digest the things that Reason demonstrates in Physics because Reason bids you perceive and digest them, this is not Physics but Morals.³ Therefore, Obedience has a place only in Moral matters: it recommends us not to do what Reason forbids, and to do what Reason dictates. What Reason dictates is to be done at a certain moment, what it forbids is never to be done.⁴ For example, Reason dictates that we should eat, drink, and refresh our body, which therefore should at a certain moment be done, viz. where, when, and how Reason prescribes it should be done. But Reason, on the other hand, forbids us to make away with ourselves, so this should never be done.

[3] This will be the Adminicle of Obedience,⁵ that we gradually lead our minds away from doing things which we know consist merely of human conventions, customs, and habits; or rather that we be studiously aware when we do them (for Reason sometimes prescribes that they have to be done⁶), that we do them not because they are prescribed by custom or habit, or established by the consensus and authority of men, but only because God commands, and Reason requires them.⁷ For in general, the dictates of Reason are easily obscured, clouded, and confused with those which are established by precedent and laid down by human laws.⁸ This leads that ever-popular Philosopher (Aristotle, *Ethics* I: 3) to complain that, “in things that are honest and just, which are the subject-matter of Ethics, there is so much dissent and so many errors that for the most part they seem to be established by human rather than natural law.”* Thus it is for this worldly man, who defers in most things to the common opinion, and accommodates them to the popular understanding; he is at a loss. He deservedly labours over a Science of such sublimity and which concerns itself with things far removed from the understanding and senses of the uninstructed.⁹ He insists that he wishes neither to demonstrate such things, nor consider them systematically, but to treat of them in a merely gross and perfunctory way;¹⁰ and still seeking general approval, extends the same principle to others who write on Ethics.¹¹ “We should be content [he says in the same place] when we speak of such matters and on the basis of

* Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* I 3, 1094 b 14–16.

such matters, to outline a rough form of truth; and when we dispute matters that are merely probable, and on the basis of such matters, that our conclusions are of the same kind. Likewise, whatever is said by another should also be accepted and approved; for it is a sign of an educated man to desire as much subtlety¹² in each subject as its nature will afford.”* Accordingly, he constructed a broad highway to popular vices, which in the subsequent pages of his book he went on to sell as virtues to his readers.¹³ In contrast, all virtuous men are sure that such things should not just be sketched with a light hand but stored up in the mind and inwardly digested; that we have to apply ourselves to them day and night; and that great perspicacity and great subtlety are required here; to the sole end that we may have the power to distinguish what is consistent with Reason from what is not, without which no-one ever became virtuous.

[4] The Fruit of Obedience is Freedom.¹⁴ He who serves Reason is a slave to no-one, but rather is on that account completely free. He does what he wants, what he does not want he does not do, and he does or does not do just so much as he has decided to do, neither more nor less, not so much as a hairsbreadth (in which perfect freedom clearly consists). For since a virtuous man, a man who is obedient to Reason, does and always does what Reason dictates, and wishes most constantly to do it, and never does, or turns his mind towards doing, what Reason forbids, it is clear that he does what he wants and never does what he does not want. If through misfortune he should be sold into slavery, and compelled to endure vile servitude, even then he is free, even then he does what he wants, and only what he wants.¹⁵ His master orders him to carry a load? He carries it. To drive a plough? He drives it. To pasture a flock? To scrub? To spin wool? And other things that are the lot of hard and base servitude? He does them: not, however, because his master commands them,¹⁶ but because he himself wants to do them.¹⁷ These tasks having presented themselves, Reason dictates that they should be done. He himself wants only one thing, to abide by this dictate. He should not, therefore, be conceived of as serving because his master orders him to serve, and because he follows his master’s orders. Suppose that your neighbour, whenever he sees you leaving your house, orders you to leave; whenever he sees you returning,

* Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* I 3, 1094 b 19–25.

orders you to return; and whenever you have a mind to get ready for a journey, orders you to be about your business; you would probably laugh at the folly of a man with nothing better to do; and although you do what he ordered you to do, you would not consider that you were obeying him, that is, you would not leave, return, or undertake anything because your neighbour commands it, but only because you have determined to do it. Likewise, a virtuous man who acts as a slave will do as he is ordered not because his master has ordered it, but because he himself has determined to do it.¹⁸ Accordingly, if his master orders him to kill his fellow-slave,¹⁹ to rob, to lie in wait, and to be generally ready for violence and infamy, he will not do it, because he does not want to do it. And he does not want to do it, because Reason forbids it. He will not do it, I maintain, even though, if he refuses, his master may threaten him with scourges, whips, the pillory, and death. From all of which it becomes clear that on all the other occasions also he did not do anything because his master wanted it, but because he himself wanted it.²⁰ This is how in his servitude he has remained wholly free, and a man who has never done anything against his principles:

A wise and virtuous man will have the courage to say: Pentheus, Ruler of Thebes, why do you impose these unjust burdens and hardships on me? I am required to give up my wealth, my herds, lands, household goods, and money. To be sure, you have the power to seize them. You may hold me under cruel restraint in manacles and fetters. But God Himself, as soon as I desire it, will release me. In other words, he declares this: I have to die, death is everything's final limit.*

§ 3. *Justice*

[1] The third daughter of Virtue is Justice, which is the cutting off of what is excessive [and making up for] what is deficient in the actions that Obedience proposes. It also stems directly from Virtue, chiefly on account of that word *exclusive*¹ found in the definition of Virtue; for anyone who loves Reason exclusively will do or not do neither more nor less than what Reason dictates should be done or not done. Justice comes after Obedience; for Justice presupposes some action from which it may trim (for this is its function) excess and

* Cf. Horace, *Epistolae* I 16, 73–79.

defect alike, while Obedience produces the action. But this is also true: no action emanates from Obedience that Justice will not previously have trimmed and refined. An action that is more or less than Reason dictates is not an obedient action: a consideration which seems to prove that Justice precedes Obedience.² But this is the nature of these sisters: they take care to conceal from us the order of their birth, of which they themselves are fully aware.³ The one whom you saluted as the elder by birth when you first beheld her, you might take to be the younger when you behold her afresh. And even Diligence itself, which seemed clearly to precede Obedience in age, may appear to be, if you examine it with due care, nothing but a kind of Obedience. After all, when we listen to Reason (which is what Diligence involves), we also heed Reason and obey it (which is Obedience). Reason bids us listen; and if we listen and obey, our Diligence is nothing but Obedience.⁴ Thus do those sweet Goddesses delight in making sport of us.⁵ But we, as mere mortals, will for our part do well to abstain from gazing too curiously and too fixedly on their divinity. We should be content to have saluted them in the order dictated to us by our natural modesty and reverence as we beheld them in passing. Then we shall have saluted them aright. If we should trust our eyes when they are thus turned down (and there has to be trust when nothing else is available), we shall judge Diligence to be the eldest, with Obedience coming next, and Justice born out of Virtue after these.

[2] The two parts of Justice are Purity and Perfection. Purity cuts off what is excessive, and is, as it were, the right arm of Justice, with which it bears its sword. Perfection supplies what is lacking, and is, as it were, the left hand of Justice, from which its scales are suspended. That which is in excess is called a *Vice of Excess*; a Vice that is deficient is called a *Vice of Defect*.^{*} Therefore, the name of some Virtue being given, if you qualify it with an adjective of *excess*, you signify by this means a Vice of Excess (as *excessively liberal*, that is, prodigal, is a Vice in Excess of liberality). But if you qualify it with an adjective of *deficiency*, you will be speaking of a Vice of Defect

* Despite his general renunciation of Aristotelian ethics (as e.g. in § 2 [3], above), Geulincx' analysis of Justice in terms of excesses and defects is clearly reminiscent of Aristotle's doctrine of the mean. More examples of excesses and defects may be found in Treatise II, below, where Geulincx discusses 'the offices of virtue'.

(as *insufficiently liberal*, or miserly, is a Vice in Defect of liberality). Hence, *lust* is opposed to chastity not through excess, as popular moralists erroneously maintain, but through defect.⁶ Someone given to lust is not excessively chaste, but less than chaste. On the other hand, that stupor which is believed to be opposed to chastity through defect is actually opposed in excess, as one who remains aloof from procreation when Reason dictates it is not less than chaste, but chaste in excess.⁷ But one should take careful note that these qualifications, *deficient* and *excessive*, are alienating terms, as Logicians say;⁸ for someone who is either too chaste or less than chaste, is not chaste at all. Furthermore, according to how one considers it, the same Vice can be either a Vice of Defect or a Vice of Excess.⁹ Thus, when it comes to giving, and *liberality* is called for, *prodigality* attaches to excess (a prodigal being too liberal), but when it is a matter of parsimony, and *frugality* is called for, prodigality attaches to defect (a prodigal being less frugal than is appropriate to parsimony). On the other hand, miserliness, which is defective in liberality, is at the same time excessive in frugality and parsimony. Similarly, *arrogance* is an excess of nobility and a defect of modesty; and *sheepishness* the other way round, being an excess of modesty and a defect of nobility. What we have observed in these few examples is a feature of many others, if not all. And though they seem to have more relevance to Logic than Ethics, they still have some important implications for Prudence,¹⁰ as we shall see in due course.

[3] This will be the Adminicle of Justice: we keep carefully in mind that things in which a little, no matter how small, is lacking or in excess, are not what they are claimed to be.¹¹ The vulgar scatter names about lavishly, and extend them to things that do not bear such a meaning. What is *almost*, they say *is*: what is *only just*, they say *is not*. These verbal abuses would be tolerable if they did not impose them on the things themselves, and fall into the habit of judging the things themselves by their names.¹² But those who have turned their mind away from the vulgar towards Philosophy have no difficulty in grasping that the essences of things are like numbers, which by addition or subtraction of only 1 (and what can be less than 1 in number?) change their nature and turn into other numbers. If 1 is added to 3, then it is no longer 3, but 4; and if 1 is subtracted, it is no longer 3, but 2. Likewise, anyone who deviates from what Reason says by the smallest amount does not do

what Reason says, but does something else, and is an enemy of God and Reason, a sinner. He has almost obeyed, I admit; but almost to obey is not to obey. He has scarcely done anything wrong, I also admit; but he has still done something wrong. What does it matter that what he has done is not all that far from Reason?¹³ To depart from Reason in such a way is infamy. Someone stands on a steep incline; he stumbles, and loses his footing. What difference does it make if he loses his footing only slightly? The mere loss of his footing means a terrible fall, and death. A shipwreck within sight of land, nay within the very harbour-mouth, is still just as much a shipwreck as on the high seas, where

—*there is nothing but sea and sky**

If we constantly reflect on these things in a mature way, we shall study how best to rid our actions of small defects and excesses. Then, as much as it is granted to mortals, we shall be just.

[4] The Fruit of Justice is Sufficiency.¹⁴ Because Justice cuts off equally from our actions what is redundant and what is deficient, it thereby restores them to satisfaction, or *sufficiency*; They become *sufficient* because they have been pruned equally of what is *too little* and *too much*. Therefore, only a Just Man can give sufficiency; others do either too little or too much. Of course, the vulgar have no trouble recognising vice in defect, and understanding that someone who does less than suffices does ill. But they take no corresponding notice of vice in excess.¹⁵ It seems to them that if it is good to give sufficiency, it is even better to give more than sufficiency. So, when they invite

* The phrase [*ubi nihil est nisi pontus et aether*] is a Latinised version of the Homeric expression in *Odyssey* XII, 404 and XIV, 302 for being at sea without any land in sight. Cf. Alexander Pope's 'And all above is sky, and ocean all around!' (XII, 474) and 'all was wild expanse of sea and air' (XIV, 333) in *The Odyssey of Homer*, ed. Maynard Mack, London and New Haven: Methuen and Yale University Press, 1967, vol. 1, 454 and vol. 2, 51. A similar expression, *caelum undique et undique pontus*, may be found in Virgil, *Aeneid* III, 193 as well as in Ernest Hemingway, *The Old Man and the Sea*, London: Arrow Books, 2004, 87: 'nothing but the sea and the sky.' In Geulincx' wording, the phrase occurs in Michael Pexenfelder, *Apparatus eruditionis tam rerum quam verborum per omnes artes et scientias*, Nürnberg: Michael and Joh. Friedrich Endter, 1670, 356: *in vasto pelago, ubi nihil nisi pontus et aether*. It is no doubt derived from a Latin edition of Homer, although other editions kept closer to Virgil's text. Cf. e.g. Lorenzo Valla and Raphael Volaterrano's translation of the *Odyssey*, Antwerp: Io. Grapheus, 1528, 91: *sed coelum undique et undique pontus* and 102: *sed maria undique et undique coelum*.

friends to a dinner, and those whom they hope will be of use to them, and the final dish is served, they plead with the guests to make do with such a frugal and very Spartan meal, assuring them they will be entertained in a better way next time, when the market will offer something better; and the flatterers respond that it has been enough, nay, more than enough¹⁶ of a meal. And indeed, to the extent that excess (or that which is more than enough) contains within itself moderation (or that which is enough), excess is not, I admit, a bad thing. But excess contains something beyond moderation, that is, beyond the *sufficient*; and this cannot be anything but *useless*, as what is beyond the *sufficient* is necessarily *useless* (since the *sufficient* would be enough). And because it is *useless*, it is acknowledged by everyone to be a bad thing. Defect too (or that which is less than enough), to the extent that it contains within itself some initial moderation (or that which is enough), is not a bad thing;¹⁷ but if it is not carried through to the end, if the deficit is not made up, if the finishing touch is not put to the work, then it is a bad thing.

SECTION II

As Humility is a large subject, I thought it best to divide this Chapter into two Sections. Humility is the most exalted of the Cardinal Virtues: when Virtue includes only Diligence, Obedience, and Justice, it is incomplete. Humility closes the circle: beyond it nothing more can be added to Virtue.

§ 1. *Humility*

[1] Humility is Disregard of oneself out of a Love of God and Reason.¹ By this I mean a Disregard that is not *positive*, but *negative*. Humility does not require anyone positively to despise himself,² to defame himself, scourge himself, or treat himself badly in some way or other. That is in itself not Humility, but the height of insanity, for Reason in itself demands no such thing. Notice the qualification *in itself*, as it can sometimes happen that on occasion we may have to put up with such things. For example, when our body is diseased, parts of it may have to be scarified, blistered, cut, and

—gangren'd members must be lopt away,
 Before the nobler parts are tainted to decay.*

There may also (to take another example) be special reasons for not concealing a crime that you have committed, so that you may have to bring on yourself hostility, hatred, and contempt. But things that are to be done on occasion and only in their place should, when we are speaking generally and in the round, not be done. Humility therefore calls for *negative* disregard of oneself, meaning that one should not labour concerning oneself, not have a care of oneself, and place no consideration of oneself ahead of a Love of Reason.³ Not that a virtuous man ought not to be able to provide for his bodily needs or mental pleasures, but that he should do so not for his own sake, and in consideration of himself, but for the sake of Reason alone, which sometimes bids him refresh his body and recreate his mind.⁴ And how, in doing things that are conducive to comfort and pleasure, we nevertheless can and must set aside all consideration of comfort and pleasure as ends in themselves, and as it were expel them from the mind (for this may sound strange and rather uncommon), I shall explain in due course.

[2] Humility also springs directly from Virtue⁵ and is very close to it.⁶ The Love of God and Reason (which is the definition of Virtue) has this effect on one who loves them, that he forsakes himself, withdraws from himself, and takes no account of himself, in which alone true and genuine Humility consists.⁷ Humility is therefore a daughter of Virtue, but so far as one can judge from outward appearances, came forth into the light after her sisters, and is the youngest by birth.⁸ Those elders, to whom we have already paid homage, are wholly and exclusively preoccupied with Reason,⁹ by whose love they were conceived. Thus, Diligence listens to Reason, Obedience obeys it, Justice clears away the obstacles to obedience, and Humility finally, after everything has been cleared away, gives up her own self as well, so that nothing at all is left to hinder Obedience in its duty. But here again I must qualify my remarks, which reflect the way Humility appears from a distance together with her sisters. From close up, however, she seems to be not the youngest, but the eldest, and to precede even Diligence by birth.¹⁰ The office of listening, to

* Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I, 190–191.

which we assigned Diligence, requires profound silence: anyone who pretends to be an honest listener to Reason must not only not listen to others but not listen to himself either. How can someone who continues to chatter to himself be in a fit state to listen to Reason? Or if he mutters, or just gapes? Anyone who wants to listen to Reason as he ought to listen must first of all reject himself, that is, be humble. Mark how Humility precedes Diligence! But once again my vision clouds.¹¹ Now I seem to see Humility not as the sister of Justice, as I once thought, but as Justice herself. To neglect myself, to reject and cut away all consideration of myself (which is the essence of Humility), what is this other than to unsheathe the sword of *Justice*, which cuts off what is superfluous and what is deficient alike? One after another they obstruct and delude me: now Humility looks to me like Obedience. For what is it that Reason dictates above all? In fact, what else does Reason dictate than not to take account of oneself? Since Humility is the expression of this, are we not compelled to say that there is no distinction between Humility and Obedience? It can even be maintained frankly that Humility is also Diligence her very self. After all, if you no longer listen to yourself, you hear nothing but Reason; but Humility is not to listen to yourself, and to listen to Reason, which is Diligence. But no more of this: with such a deal of metamorphosis, this Pandora has had us leaping back and forth long enough.¹²

§ 2. *Inspection of Oneself*

[1] Humility has two parts: Inspection of Oneself, and Disregard of Oneself. As to the former, it is nothing other than that celebrated saying of the Ancients, KNOW THYSELF, once inscribed over the portico of the Temple of Apollo.* *One can see this inscription as a greeting as it were from God to men, instead of a 'Be well' to bid us be well. Be well! As if it were not fitting to say 'Be well', and greet each other in this way, but that we should rather bid each other to live temperately.*† Such is that divine saying of Plato in his *Charmides*, whose words dazzle me: “As if it

* *Gnôthi Seautôn*, or *Know Thyself* was to be the first title under which Geulincx' *Ethics* would be published in 1675: *Gnôthi Seautôn, Sive Arnoldi Geulincx Ethica*. Leiden: A. Severini, 1675.

† Plato, *Charmides*, 164 d–164 e.

were not fitting to say ‘Be well’, and greet each other in this way, but that we should rather bid each other to live temperately.” (Or to live humbly, as Christians say). I fear that he may not have said this intentionally, but by chance. His finger points to the source of Humility; he strikes the nail on the head; but he does not drive it in.

[2] *Inspection of Oneself* consists in a careful enquiry into the nature, condition, and origin of oneself.¹ In order rightly to undertake it, I must begin by reflecting, and then in solitude communing with myself, thus: I see so many, and such diverse things; I see the resplendent radiance of the Sun, which furnishes me with the alternation of day and night, Winter and Summer, heat and cold; I see the Moon tempering the darkness of the night, and innumerable lesser lights dotted about the vault of Heaven; I see clouds, for the most part white, sometimes black, sometimes (just before sunset or sunrise) adorned with a variety of colours; whence I will be startled by a frightening clap of thunder, before watching triple-forked thunderbolts flash and shudder; after this, I see storm-clouds, hailstorms, and falling snow; the vast and enormous sky at times washed by mists and vapours, and at other times clear and pleasantly azure. I feel air circulating about me, and breezes buffeting me, I hear the air alternately streaming in and out of my mouth and nostrils, gently while I just breathe, but roughly and forcefully when I sigh or gasp for breath. I observe the sea, rolling or restless, the tide coming in and going out at the appointed hours, I see lakes, springs, and streams. I see the Earth, fecund and fertile with an innumerable stock of trees, herbs, stones, and metals; and on it, just as in the waters and the air, infinitely many kinds of flying, swimming, walking, and creeping things. When I see all these things, I say that I am seeing the World,² or some part of the World.³ But even as I see them, I am well aware that I did not make any of them, that I cannot make any of them,⁴ and that I have simply found them here all about me.

[3] Finally, there is also a certain body which is more joined to me, and in such a way that through its intervention I perceive all the other bodies which we have mentioned, and without whose intervention I would be incapable of perceiving them (I cannot see without eyes, or hear without ears). Because this body is joined to me in such a way, I am accustomed to call it *my* body.⁵ I am also well aware that I did not make this body,⁶ in fact that I cannot make

anything at all like it. Even though I may perhaps once have engendered some such body, or could even now engender one, I realise that to engender such a body is not to make such a body, any more than sowing a field is to make the corn and the flowers that it yields.⁷

[4] Now it is indeed the case that my body moves in accordance with my will. When I want to speak, my tongue flaps about in my mouth; when I want to swim, my arms splash about; when I want to walk, my feet are flung forward. But I do not make that motion.⁸ I do not know how such a thing is brought about, and it would be impudent of me to say that I do what I do not know how to do.⁹ I do not know how, and through which nerves and other channels, motion is directed from my brain into my limbs;¹⁰ nor do I know how motion reaches the brain,¹¹ or even whether it reaches the brain at all. With the aid of Physics and Anatomy I may be able to trace this motion for some distance, but I still feel sure that in moving my organs I am not directed by that knowledge; and that on occasion I have moved them just as promptly, or perhaps even more promptly, when nothing could have been further from my mind.¹² When I am completely exhausted, or better still, when without my knowing it, paralysis seems to overcome my limbs, I am pushed towards movement in a similar way to when I was still fresh and sound.¹³ It is clear from this that, even when certain parts of my body do move in accordance with my will, I do not make this motion.¹⁴

[5] If I do not make motion in my body, how much less do I make motion outside my body! How much less do I do the other things that from time to time, taking the popular view, I so confidently say that I do, such as writing, drawing, baking bread, making bricks, a table, shoes, or clothing!¹⁵ These things can be done only through motion; and since I cannot make motion, I cannot persuade myself that I do all the things that I have just mentioned, or any others.

[6] Finally, it is clear, I freely admit, that I do nothing outside myself; that whatever I do stays within me; and that nothing I do passes into my body, or any other body, or anything else. Even if there is someone else who, without consulting me, and arbitrarily, wills my action to affect my body, or something else, and by willing, makes it affect these things, I have no part in this, and the action is not mine but his. For sometimes I act in such a way for my action to reach things outside me and yet I labour in vain, even when I do

everything that is required of me, and do the same as I did when my action did have effects outside me.¹⁶

[7] Therefore, when my actions are diffused outside me, it is because someone else animates them,¹⁷ imparting the force and weight by which alone they are achieved, and which they could not have received from me. This same one has set limits¹⁸ beyond which he refuses to carry my actions. At the command of my will¹⁹ (here the action is within me) my hands may move in a corresponding way (and here the action is outside me, and now translated into my body, not indeed by me but by him who can do this) so as to grasp and pick up certain stones and pile them up into what I am pleased to call a house or tower (which I also claim that I build); yet the stars will not rise or set at the command of my will,²⁰ clouds will not gather to water my crops, or pass over when I stand in need of sunshine, nor will the sea ebb and flow otherwise than is its custom.

[8] Thus, I am a mere spectator of a machine²¹ whose workings I can neither adjust nor readjust. I neither construct nor demolish anything here: the whole thing is someone else's affair.

[9] But we still have to enquire in what manner I am a spectator of this scene.²² I am more than sufficiently persuaded that when I behold the vastness of the heavens, the air, the sea, the dry land and its inhabitants, the stars, clouds, animals, plants, and fossils,²³ they are just as I see them.²⁴ But even if they were just as I see them, why should I see them? Of course, because I have eyes;²⁵ but what does this mean, *I have eyes*? Skin, membranes, and integuments, filled, composed, and shaped in certain ways with certain fluids. These fluids and integuments do not see;²⁶ but I see, so I am something quite different from them.²⁷ It must be that I see by virtue of them; yet what virtue they bring to seeing, I do not perceive, and simply cannot understand.²⁸ The eyes (that is, those integuments and fluids) receive an image (that is, some impulse) from objects that can cause them to reflect this image like a mirror, or transmit it to some internal part of the brain, to be impressed as it were on a tablet. But this still does not amount to seeing, because to see is neither to reflect an image as in a mirror, nor to impress a mark on a tablet; but for a bystander to apply his eyes to it, to perceive the image that lies before him, or this mark, with his eyes, and to understand it, this indeed is to see. If this is all the eyes bring to seeing (and

what else can they bring?), I must needs have still other eyes in order to see the image reflected by my eyes or imprinted on my brain, about which eyes the same question, or rather complaint, arises all over again. Do the eyes then bring nothing to seeing? Obviously they bring something; it is clear to me from my experience and consciousness that the eyes are involved in seeing. But in what way? In one way only. Their nature, power, and capacity bring nothing to seeing comparable to (for example) the nature, power, and capacity of length to be divided into parts. What the eyes offer, and bring to seeing is something that they get not from their own nature, nor from me, but from somewhere else.

[10] Having thus pondered these things, I understand clearly how I have come to acknowledge that my actions do not affect things in the world, and that neither do the actions of the world affect me. Here once again I get some inkling of the power and activity of another, a power and activity that cannot be stated in words. This much I understand clearly, that it is not owing to the power either of objects or my eyes that I see; this much I also understand clearly, that in consequence there exists something else (which I shall call a Divinity, for want of a better name) whose power grants these things to me; though how it grants them I do not understand, although I do understand that I shall never understand it. But it would be inappropriate, just because I do not know how they come about,²⁹ if I were to regard the very obvious and clear results of my enquiries as tainted.³⁰ It would be as if someone were to deny that a magnet attracts iron just because he does not understand why it does so. Likewise, I would have to deny that I see, because (as I have now realised) I do not know how I see.

[11] Thus, I have now diagnosed my condition.³¹ I merely experience the World. I am a spectator of the scene, not an actor. And yet, the World that I observe cannot itself impress on me the likeness under which I observe it. The World impels its likeness towards my body and leaves it there:³² it is the Divinity that then conveys it from my body into me, and into my mind.

[12] I have diagnosed my condition; it only remains to enquire how I came to it. But I cannot get beyond *I do not know*, there is nothing I can add to this *I do not know*. I do not know how I came to this condition (the results of my enquiries have wrung this admission

from me). What is lacking is the knowledge of how I came to this condition.³³ I have rightly acknowledged that no volition of mine imposed it on me.³⁴ I did not come into it of my own accord, nor did He who so miraculously brought me to this condition ever ask me whether I wished to be in it. God brought me to it without my even knowing about it, let alone willing it.

[13] And I see that just as I was brought hither, so I can be carried hence,³⁵ now or in the future, even at this very moment,³⁶ carried away still ignorant,³⁷ and not willingly, but more than that (and to my disgrace) against my will. I do not know what kind of servility it is that makes me prefer to adhere to the things my Master once ordered than to what He orders now.³⁸ When He brought me here, He at the same time ordered me to remain here until He should call me back,³⁹ but I, to my shame, prefer to remain rather than depart when He calls me back.⁴⁰ Or perhaps it would be more accurate to say that I have a bad conscience.⁴¹ For I, who should know and be mindful of the fact that I can do nothing, have yet behaved as if I could do everything. With all that was in me, I made great things small, turned them upside down, and mixed them together.⁴² But since I could not connect any of them with the things that I found outside myself, I hoarded within myself this whole mass of foulness and disorder.⁴³ This is why, as a wicked and slothful servant, I fear to return.⁴⁴ In fact I would draw back from it if I could, thereby, if anything, adding a new offence to the rest.

[14] The following is an epitome of what I have learned from the Inspection of Myself.⁴⁵ I have learned these things so thoroughly that for me and for all those who have carefully pondered them with me, they have a certainty and clarity to which even the Demonstrations of Mathematics⁴⁶ cannot aspire:

1. In this world I cannot act on anything outside me.
2. My every Action, insofar as it is mine, remains within me.
3. Owing to divine power, my actions are sometimes diffused outside me.
4. To that extent, they are not my Actions, but God's.
5. They diffuse when, and to what degree it seems fitting to God, in accordance with the laws laid down by His free decision, and dependent on His will,⁴⁷ so that it is no less miraculous when by

the power of His will my tongue is made to flap in my mouth as I utter the word 'Earth' than if that same power were to make the Earth shake at the utterance of the same word.⁴⁸ The only difference is that it sometimes pleases God to make the former happen, but never the latter.

6. I am but a spectator of the World.⁴⁹
7. Nevertheless, the World itself cannot produce that spectacle for me.⁵⁰
8. God alone can produce that spectacle.
9. And He does so in such an ineffable and incomprehensible manner that among all the stupendous miracles with which God favours me on this scene, I myself, the spectator,⁵¹ am His greatest and most enduring miracle.
10. I can be removed from this scene,⁵² that is, I can be expelled from the World: and indeed at this very moment. Yet being in the World for me is only to be a spectator of the same (which, although this belongs to me, I owe to God), and to move certain things in it, that is, certain bodily things (which movement is, however, God's alone,⁵³ and is only attributed or imputed to me, because it happens in accordance with my will).
11. I fear that expulsion from the World which is called death.
12. Partly because I have become so habituated to corporeal life that it is hard to tear myself away from it, and partly because I have a bad conscience, I know that the account that I have to render of myself is not in my favour.

§ 3. *Disregard of Oneself*¹

The second part of Humility is *Disregard of Oneself*. This is the complement of *Inspection*, which contains only the rudiments and beginning of Humility. Moreover, we have to infer the Form of this from the Matter in whose potentiality it is latent. The Disregard consists in the abandonment of myself, altogether relinquishing, transferring, and yielding myself to God, from whom, as I have seen, I have my whole being (in coming hither, acting here, and departing hence). I must be led by no regard for myself, I must put away all care and study of myself; and as one who has no right over anything, not even over myself, also claim nothing by right. I must have a mind

not for what suits me, but for what God commands, and I must labour not over my own happiness, blessedness, or repose, but over my obligations alone.

§ 4. *First Obligation*

[1] Let me therefore proceed in accordance with the plan which the Inspection of myself has convinced me is right and well-founded. I see at first¹ that I have this obligation: *When God summons me from the living, and orders me to return to Him, I must not persist in refusal, but hold myself ready to fly to Him eagerly and without delay. I must not plead hindrances (for to act tardily is to act unwillingly), and must not be deterred from returning by the awareness of things badly done while I was still here.*² A servant who is delayed by the awareness of things left undone, and who does not present himself as soon as his master calls, thereby adds to his offence. Is not such reluctance diametrically opposed to that abandonment, desertion, rejection, and disavowal of myself to which I am bound under the law of Humility? Did the light of nature not make it clear and beyond question to me? How can I desert myself, and transfer myself wholly to God, if I am still preoccupied with my own affairs, and refuse to obey for fear of being chastised³—while deserving to be chastised?

[2] And in any case, my resistance is useless,⁴ as nothing can delay the execution of God's commands. When God summons me, I shall return, whether I want to or not, though I am so foolish and conceited that it pleases me to trifle in such serious matters, and by resisting to labour in vain. Now that I have come to my senses, be it therefore resolved as follows: *When God summons me hence, nothing will stay me. I shall come at once, come with all my heart, come willingly and readily; I shall fly to Him.*⁵ *But contrary to the multitude of naturally savage and violent men, my wings will not be formed by the weariness of life, or the infirmities of man's lot. I shall come simply because God calls me. All He has to do is call; and His call will urge me on with all possible despatch. Will awful terrors assail me?*⁶ *Torments rack me? Ordeals make trial of me? Yes, I shall suffer; but insofar as it is lawful for a man, I resolve that I shall do nothing, or for that matter refuse to do anything, on account of such sufferings. I shall render myself up wholly to God, to whom I owe my entire being. He must decide concerning me as it seems fit. And whatever He does, it will be for the best.*

§ 5. *Second Obligation*

[1] My Second Obligation is: *Not to depart when not summoned, not to quit my post and station of life without orders from the Supreme Commander.* It is clear that this Obligation follows in the same way as the first from my profession of Self-Abandonment,¹ according to which I am required to relinquish even my right to depart from this World. I must submit that decision wholly to God, as His divine prerogative. It is wrong for me to claim from Him something of that prerogative for myself. If I wish to arrogate something of it to myself, I am wicked and impious, one who assumes what is not his, but God's. It is vain for me to attempt what I cannot undertake, like a ridiculous dwarf aspiring to wrest the club out of the hand of Hercules.² And just as we must come when God summons us, so, when he does not summon us, we must tarry. No-one can get in his way, no-one can interpose himself between God and His will: He has reserved the whole matter to Himself.

[2] And even though under the influence of silly and stupid arguments³ I might be in the habit of believing that I can die when I want, it is nevertheless not the case, as my Inspection of Myself has unequivocally taught me. First of all, I am not going to depart from my body merely by wanting to depart from it:⁴ I am most intimately aware that I cannot. When I have decided that I want to depart from my body, I will have to raise my own hands against my body, to defile, injure and oppress it.⁵ But I cannot yield my body to whips and scourges without motion; and I cannot cause motion in my body (honest Inspection of Myself makes that transparently obvious to me). I can only will it, and when I will it, God usually imparts the motion that I will; not because I will it, but because He wills that the motion that I will should be imparted. For example, if a baby wants the cradle* in which he has been laid to be rocked, it is usually rocked; though not because *he* wants it, but because his mother or nursemaid, who is sitting by the cradle and who can actually rock it,⁶ also wants to do what he wants. Therefore, if I should contemplate something more serious with regard to myself, such as deciding to

* On Beckett's use of this image in *Murphy*, *Film* and *Rockaby*, see Uhlmann's introduction below. Also see Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*, Cambridge: CUP, 2006.

stab myself in the heart with a dagger or hang myself, I shall not be able to create the motion required to bring this about. Perhaps God will create it, and thereby despatch me; though not because I have decided to depart, but because He has decided what I have decided.⁷ But it is impious of me on my own judgement and counsel to depart without God's authorisation, impious of me to depart without being summoned, insofar as it is my business,⁸ which is to say that I wished to depart before knowing that I had been summoned.

[3] Now that I rightly comprehend this Obligation of mine, I embrace it, and receive it unto myself; and am resolved thus: *I shall remain here on God's orders; without His orders I shall not depart. Let all the hatred, spite, and calumnies of the world befall me,⁹ let them receive all my good deeds with scorn, let them vilify me, and cover me with curses; let nothing be left to me but exile, destitution, bereavement, ostracism, and imprisonment; let the savagery and fury of tyrants overwhelm me, and a thousand deaths threaten me;¹⁰ let my body be consumed by starvation, scab, and consumption;¹¹ let fear, pain, tedium, and consciousness of evil-doing oppress my spirit; let lethargy, bewilderment, listlessness, and stupidity possess my mind.¹² Yet still I am certain that I should not want to anticipate death, or slay myself, but stay calm,¹³ for God bids me rise above these calamities. If He ceases to bid me rise above them, He will take me away. The yoke of His will must be borne for His sake, not for mine, who would rather play than work.¹⁴ But even though may I bask in the approbation and flatteries of men,¹⁵ though everyone is wholeheartedly in favour of me, though everyone wishes me wealth and good cheer, congratulates me, gives me presents, and praises me to the skies; though I may for a time abound with riches, my anteroom daily thronged with a multitude of clients, consorting every day with friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and rejoicing in an excellent and chaste wife, and dear children;¹⁶ though my body may be robust, shapely, vigorous, and perfect in every part;¹⁷ my demeanour lofty, secure, and genial, reinforced by the consciousness of acting rightly;¹⁸ my mind acute, shrewd, always nourished and well-stocked with ideas to be investigated and considered¹⁹—all these things, I say, may console me,²⁰ soothe me, embrace me, but none of them will detain me, none of them will furnish me with a pretext for remaining here. I shall remain in their midst, but not for their sake; not on their account, but on account of the law that God has laid down for me: that is why I shall remain here. It alone will constrain and bind me, it alone will exact from me a willingness to remain here.*

[4] This Second Obligation is of the greatest moment in Ethics;²¹ and those philosophers who did not fully understand it (such as cer-

tain of the Stoics, especially Seneca) lost their way, and remained wholly ignorant of the true path of Virtue. In fact, in place of Virtue they substituted a monstrous lust, mere self-love, and ushered into our presence Sin its very own self. If someone wants to be free and untrammelled to depart hence, why continue to feed himself, why learn a new skill or embrace a new mode of life in order to earn a living? Is it not because it pleases him? It now pleases him to remain among the living, and accordingly he obtains the things that promote sustenance, comfort, and pleasure. When it no longer pleases him to remain among the living, he will depart. Thus he will do everything, omit to do everything, because it pleases him. Now what is this other than unbridled lust, perpetual self-absorption, and utter contempt for Reason?

[5] And certainly, Seneca, above all, seems to have looked to and pursued this obsession, sounding the trumpet in favour of such a savage and limitless form of licence, and going before us with the monstrous and brazen clamour of his rhetoric (in which there is more than enough spirit,²² but too little intelligence). In Epistle 70, when he poses himself the objection: *You will encounter some professing Wisdom who would deny that violence may be offered against oneself, and judge it wrong to take one's own life*, he has no other reply than to assert *that those who would say this close off the way to freedom*.^{*23} As he does not know what freedom really is, he should rather have said “licence and indomitable lust”. Freedom is the Fruit of Obedience, not rebellion. (See, if you will, Reader, what Section I, § 2 [4] of this Chapter has to say about real and true freedom). In this connection it is helpful to take into account also what he says in his treatise *On Providence*, Chapter 6, where amongst other things he would represent God as saying that virtuous men are His equals, even in some respects His superiors,²⁴ and at length also has Him pronounce thus:²⁵ *I have above all taken care not to keep you here against your will; the way is open; if you do not wish to stand and fight, you may run away. Therefore, of all the things that I have deemed necessary for you, I have made dying the easiest. I have set your soul on a downward slope; it is on the move*.²⁶ *Only observe, and you will see how short and easy is the way that leads to freedom. I have not imposed on you in going forth such long delays as in entering; if a man were as tardy about dying as being born, fortune would have maintained*

* Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, § 14.

her mighty dominion over you. Every season, every place, may teach you how easy it is to renounce nature and dash away her bounty.²⁷ . . . The spirit does not lurk in the depths, nor does it need to be excised with steel; the heart does not need to be searched out by deep wounds;²⁸ death is close at hand. Nor have I appointed a definite place for these mortal strokes: wherever you wish, the way is open. The thing itself that is called dying, the moment when life departs from the body, is so brief that its rapidity cannot be felt. Whether a noose strangles the throat,²⁹ whether water stops the breath, whether the hardness of the ground crushes the skull of one who falls to earth, whether the devouring flame cuts off the ingoing and outgoing flow of air, whatever it is, it will soon be over. Do you not blush for shame to dread for so long something that is so swiftly over.^{30}*

[6] So he says; let us examine it. *Not to keep you here against your will.* Virtuous men are certainly kept here; but not kept here against their will. They are bound to remain here by the Law of God;³¹ and they love it with all their heart, and wish to obey it with their whole mind and spirit. Nothing can befall them that is so dire, nothing can arouse in them such horror and loathing that it would induce them to take their own lives. What would this be but to violate that very Law? In short, I say, though they are kept here, they are perfectly free.³² *If you do not wish to stand and fight, you may run away.* It is a singular commander indeed³³ who addresses his troops like this; in fact, an insane or crazy commander. Such a God you fashion for yourself, Seneca! What kind of commander is this but a crazy one? *Men, I have set you in your battle formations; I have led you to the front line; but as soon as you have seen it, you may flee it.* How much more effective to say: *Men, you must fight! Stand firm, and do not leave the field unless I give you the signal to retreat.*³⁴ Next, Seneca has God say: *Of all the things that I have deemed necessary for you, I have made dying the easiest.* This is to persuade all those who do not examine the matter carefully that they can die when they please; but how deluded they are, we saw a little earlier. Let us, however, suppose that what vastly exceeds our powers is nevertheless easy. To be sure, God does not usually deny to our will such motions as are required to do away with someone, and for this reason we can say: *it is easy to do away with oneself.* Easy, yes; but should we do it?³⁵ Many things are obviously both easy and shameful. For instance, to run away when the enemy is upon him is as easy for a soldier as it is also infamous;³⁶ you would not dare

* Seneca, *De Providentia*, Chapter 6, §§ 7–9.

dispute this at Rome, Seneca! *I have not imposed on you in going forth such long delays as in entering.* Not true: it takes us a moment to enter, and a moment to go forth. And how could it be otherwise with us? We are without parts, we cannot be partly present and partly absent, but must of necessity be either wholly present or wholly absent. Of course, our body has parts, from which it can gradually grow and be adapted to our uses, but we ourselves have no parts.³⁷ For example, suppose someone reads these words, hears himself reading them, and in reading them weighs carefully the arguments that they contain, while at the same time feeling pain in his legs, or being otherwise affected. Then he perceives quite clearly, and is intimately aware of the fact that there is not one who sees, one who hears, one who suffers, and one who reasons, but that he is one and the same who sees with his eyes, hears with his ears, feels pain in his legs, and philosophises with his mind. He never finds any parts in himself,³⁸ but only in his body. Thus much by the way, and for form's sake, as I shall discuss it at greater length elsewhere, in my *Metaphysics*.^{*} I have taken the opportunity here because consideration of it obviously has some bearing on one's knowledge of oneself. *Every season, every place, may teach you how easy it is to renounce nature, etc.* The same sort of stuff as before. These arguments all teach us that it is easy; none of them teaches us that it is something we should do. But come: when life has been made so hard for me, and I have a sure means of divesting myself of it, should I not rather divest him of it who has made it so hard for me? In such cases there is usually someone to blame. If poverty makes my life a burden, why should I decide to give up that burdensome life rather than sustain it out of the fortunes of others through theft and expropriation? If we should strive only for such vain facility and freedom, Seneca, the latter course would seem to me to be even freer and more facile. I would be able to come quickly enough to that freedom of yours when I was no longer able to enjoy my own. *You dread for so long something that is so swiftly over?* What is so swiftly over is expiated by eternal punishment, and the guilt of it is never purged.³⁹ Almost the same sentiments as infest Epistles 58 and 70 are rampant elsewhere. Seneca does not attempt to justify what he says, but hammers it out, as if striking the reader with his fist, insisting over and

^{*} Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, "Tertia Scientia", in *Opera* II, 149/*Metaphysics*, 33–34.

over again *that there are many exits, that they are easy*, with little else by way of argument. But what difference does it make? We are not permitted to depart, God forbids it; as I have conclusively demonstrated above. Everyone has the power to see this for himself: all he has to do is put his mind to it, and be willing to reflect maturely on those demonstrations.

§ 6. *Third Obligation*

[1] The Third Obligation proceeds immediately from the Second.¹ It enjoins on me the following: *To refresh my body*,² to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to be moderate in all these things;³ to await hunger, thirst, and sleep, not summon them, or anticipate them with luxury, and when they get hold of me, to defeat them with what is at hand. For the very things that are designed by nature to spin out the thread of life, soon break it if they are used immoderately and unseasonably. It is well said that: *Gluttony kills more than the sword*.^{*} The Obligation also extends to *being on guard against the well-known hazards of life, applying remedies to them*, and also *requesting and pleading for the assistance of others*⁴ should I fall into the water, among thieves, sick, into poverty, and other hazards of life of that sort. If I stubbornly refuse to heed these and similar warnings that the Obligations indicate, my behaviour is suicidal, which is diametrically opposed to my duty under the Second Obligation.

[2] The Obligation *to procreate* also arises from this.⁵ In the same way as God has ordered me to remain here as a single individual, he has ordered the human race to remain here as well; and just as I must eat in order to remain, so I must at some time *procreate* in order that the human race may remain here. For *to eat* is to nourish and refresh oneself, and *to procreate* is to nourish and sustain one's species. Just as we must not only nourish our body in order that it may survive, but also develop it in order that it may be adequate to the functions to which it has been destined by nature, so it is incumbent on us not only to renew the human race through procreation, but to increase it. Outstandingly virtuous and learned men,

* *Plures occidit gula quam gladius*: Latin saying, included as *Gula plures quam gladius perimit* in Grynaeus, 468.

who also have the faculty of inspiring others to virtue through their teaching and moral example, are often relieved of the Obligation to generate. Just as by moderate abstinence from food and drink ill humours in the body are reduced and controlled, and then transformed into good ones, or relegated by superior ones to where they cannot create trouble and danger for the body; so also, as if by abstinence, that vast body of humanity which is scattered over the whole globe has its chief organs perfected in Wisdom and Virtue, and as a result rendered in some measure more beautiful, healthy, and vigorous. Others, who are unable to bring such a great amount of credit into their account, and are deficient in morals and learning, must be regarded for the most part as mere breeders, whose role is to engender and raise offspring; the greater part of the globe being still uninhabited. But at the same time, I would not expect all of the latter to procreate, or forbid procreation to the former. I cannot expound everything here, nor is it necessary: I make this point, that those who pursue a celibate life for the sake of convenience, freedom, fame, or the admiration of the crowd contravene God's ordinance.

[3] However,⁶ I must take care not to cause offence in some way, or perhaps fall into error. I mean that it is important that while expatiating on the Third Obligation, I should bear in mind the earlier Obligations,⁷ on which it is founded; and not ornament and overload the upper storey so much that the lower ones are put under strain, and the whole edifice falls to the ground in ruins as a result of this storey collapsing onto them. Above all, I must remember (because it is the foundation of the edifice)⁸ *to abandon myself, and deliver myself entirely into God's hands*. It follows from this that I must indeed studiously and diligently follow the Third Obligation, but without fuss,⁹ anxiety or care, at least if I have summoned or fed them myself. If any of them should befall me¹⁰ (and they belong to my human condition), then, being satisfied with just so much as concerns me and careless of everything else, I shall be able to ignore it, and set it at naught. I know that the fact that I have proved that nothing is to be feared will not stop me from fearing: I can advise myself about this, but usually cannot persuade myself of it. But why should I be anxious and solicitous about it? For whom am I anxious and solicitous? For God? Ridiculous! On my account? I just now abandoned myself, and am lost to myself. For those around me?¹¹

Hardly, for where there is no *Me*, there also there is no *My*. Are things hard? It is no reason for fear. Is there no food to be had? Or it is to be had, but too little for my starving body? That is of little account. When God summons me, and the Obligation to which I had formerly addressed myself is terminated, another Obligation waits its turn, to which my conduct must be directed, namely that I must come to the one who is summoning me, the one who is calling me. Until now, I ate in order to live; and wanted to live, because God had commanded me to want it. But now that I can no longer obey Him by eating and drinking (because He no longer wants me to obey Him in this way), I must turn to what He now wants me to do. Now that He calls me forth from among the living, calls me to Himself, I must come, and nothing more will remain for me but to come. How He will receive me, I do not trouble myself, as I no longer trouble about myself at all.¹² Whether He will in due course infuse me into another body?¹³ Whether He will keep me with Himself, divested of a body?¹⁴ Whether He will receive me at all, as I am evil?¹⁵ Whether He will forgive me, as He is good?¹⁶ Whether He will combine these two in some ineffable way¹⁷ (for many of the things that I learned from the Inspection of Myself are the traces He has left in me of an exalted and ineffable wisdom)¹⁸ that satisfies at the same time both His Piety and His Justice? If I look diligently, I am able to divine a little of it, but for the time being I put it off, I affect not to know. I am preoccupied with my Obligations, I am about my duty, engaged in it, there is no time for other matters. I must first search out what the Master demands of me: if there is then any leisure left over from the performance of my office, I may consider enquiring into such matters; in fact I shall in due course enquire into them when I know that my Master wants me to enquire into them. Until now, indeed, such things seemed to be my Master's business, and no affair of mine. Thus, by adhering strictly (as I ought) to my Obligations (I have nothing beyond them), I can plead for myself or my thoughts no excuse for fear or anxiety. Whichever way I turn, all things bid me to put aside my cares,¹⁹ all things bid me to be of good cheer.

[4] Let us now look forward to the Fourth Obligation. But before that, wait a little while, Philaretus. There is a little piece of grit here; let me dig it out, so that it does not stick in you and cause you pain; for I intend to take all precautions against anything that might

retard your progress along this royal road to Virtue. You will recall that I founded the whole of the Second Obligation on our not being able to leave this life of our own accord, not being able to die when we wish, and having no power to do any such thing. And having no power, neither should we attempt anything: whatever needs to be transacted on this scene should be remitted to God, who alone has the power, who alone has dominion over life and death. Indeed, we have no power²⁰ even to eat and drink, and to do other things that are subject to the Third Obligation. We have no control over the motion that they require: we cannot impress motion on a body, and we cannot block it, which the Second Obligation presupposes, and in which the Inspection of Ourselves has thoroughly instructed us. But Philaretus, does this not mean that we are relieved of the Third Obligation? We have no power to eat and drink? Let us not therefore undertake anything.²¹ Let us not stretch forth our hand towards food; let us not return our hand to our mouth burdened with what it has taken up; let us not bite into the morsels that lie between our teeth; let the palate not convey to the gullet what the teeth have chewed up. I admit that some in the days of our ancestors have been carried away by this kind of madness, climbing into trees and mounting onto rooftops, denying that it was lawful for them to spend their days and nights troubling themselves about what they should eat and what they should drink, and bearing witness that the whole business should be left to God; that He might feed them, if it is His will; if it is not His will, that He might take them from among the living. Dull,²² miserable folk! But no more of that. A difficulty remains; it must be got rid of, eh? But, as I now see, in a subtle manner. In imposing upon us the Second Obligation, commanding us to remain among the living, God commanded us at the same time to assent to it,²³ to acquiesce in it, to approve of it, and to do our part in remaining here. To this end He ordered us to want (for what else can our part be?) those motions that He has deemed necessary for feeding and refreshing the body. Experience teaches us that it is so.²⁴ We observe that such motions will not be forthcoming unless we effectively want them; and that when they cease to be forthcoming we depart our body, and do not stay, as we were bound to. Hence, the reasoning that established the Second Obligation cannot overturn the Third, which the second necessarily entails. We know at last that the Third Obligation, as an upper storey, is built on the Second, as a lower storey, and not directly on the foundations of

the building, onto which, if you tried to build it directly, I agree that it would collapse. Let me sum up, Philaretus. Wherein we see that we can do nothing, therein we must also attempt nothing. We must (in Scholastic terms) conduct ourselves *in a merely negative way*; unless God wants us to consent and co-operate. And experience teaches us, as I remarked, that when it comes to our bodily sustenance He *does* want it.

§ 7. *Fourth Obligation*

[1] The Fourth Obligation directly builds on the Third: *it bids me to acquire some skill, to embrace some condition and institution of life, and after I have embraced it, diligently to make room for the offices of that institution; and neither break it off at every opportunity for change, nor (if I should happen to have chosen ill) to cling desperately to it, as though my condition of life and life itself were the same thing.*¹ This is because, unless I provide the wherewithal to secure food, or to shelter myself from the inclemencies of the weather (which is the point of the Third Obligation), the Fourth Obligation will not come into force.

[2] A condition of life is to be secured which may suffice to maintain the body in good order. Anything beyond this, anything that seeks pleasure or pomp, seeks to reassume that mountainous burden of *self*, which Humility had so happily rejected and cast off. There should accordingly be only so much of the condition as suffices for sustenance, only so much sustenance as suffices for life, and ultimately only so much life as God will allow. Thus one must always beware² lest an upper storey, by being broader and more massive than a lower, should vitiate the whole structure, crack, come apart, and drag the lower stories down with it, even to the very foundation of Virtue, into the same ruin.

[3] I must be sure to select a condition of life that not only suffices for me, but to which I suffice and am equal;³ nor must I allow myself to drift so aimlessly and heedlessly with the tide that I become attached to some condition of life like a barnacle attached to a rock. Am I of robust body, but dull wits, and a weak spirit?⁴ Then I shall be numbered among the hewers of wood and drawers of water. Of body and wits feeble, but merry and cheerful of spirit? Then I shall be a tapster or innkeeper. With body and mind weak, will my wits

be worth anything? I shall be a tailor or schoolmaster. A mind both elevated and penetrating? Then I shall be a philosopher, and perfect others in wisdom and virtue. What shall I do with a mind that is great, steadfast, and unshakeable? I shall devote myself to the serious business of the Republic. I shall regard none of these conditions of life as superior to the rest. The occupation into which Reason guides me, or to which God sometimes calls me, that will seem to me the most attractive. Then I must strain all my sinews to be an ornament to it.

[4] And I shall transact all these things diligently, yet without anxiety,⁵ reminding myself that I do them all, or refrain from doing them, not because I study my own advantage, but because I obey God.⁶ Do I suffer rejection? Has the post which Reason impelled me to solicit fallen to a rival? What of that? God ordered me to try, not to succeed. In soliciting it, I wanted only to obey God, and nothing else. The occupation that I sought has fallen to me, but my judgements and actions in going about it do not achieve the outcome that I intended? What does it matter? God did not enjoin the outcome on me, only the intention. He wished the latter to be my own, the former He withdrew from my duty as much as my power. *Therefore, O my soul, if you would obey God, and would do that alone (as you should), why are you so anxious?*

§ 8. *Fifth Obligation*

The Fifth Obligation¹ is built directly on the Fourth. It dictates that *I must do many things, suffer many things, either serving faithfully and equably some institution or course of life, or at times changing it, and redirecting the course of my pilgrimage elsewhere, if need be.* I must sleep in due proportion, abstain from frivolity, perspire and be chilled, serve hard labour, endure tediums, before I can make even moderate progress in any discipline to which I can put my name. What if I have to scale the heights of Wisdom in order to make progress in anything? Harder things will lie in store for me, and not just hard, but dreadful: the censure of others will sting me, their malice will gnaw at me, their hostility oppress me and wear me down. Suppose that Reason should lead me to seek public office: then rivals, rumour-mongers, slanderers, intrigue, rejection, disquiet, insomnias, the ignorance and brutality of the ungrateful multitude, all these are established, prepared,

and destined for me. Suppose Reason exiles me to the country, or amongst labourers, pedlars, and cobblers? Servitude will earn me my daily wage, the burden of family life will crush me, I shall be an object of contempt, to the disgust of some, the derision of others. Suppose, finally, that at Reason's bidding I quit my condition and defect to another. Now I shall have to undertake things with which I am unfamiliar, of which I am ignorant. Among all these fresh and novel things, some unimagined things will perplex me, some unexpected things will take me by surprise. I shall be talked about by others, some of whom will dismiss me as an uneducated old simpleton, others laugh at me. All these pills will have to be taken and swallowed. It is God, to whom I have surrendered my whole self, who has prescribed them for me.

§ 9. *Sixth Obligation*

[1] This pendant to the Fifth Obligation consists in the rule that one should *frequently relax the mind*,¹ lest it become jaded by incessant business. One must regularly appease the Graces with walks, excursions, indulging in play, amusements, and the stories and wit of friends, by dining, drinking, dancing, and (I nearly said) playing the buffoon, but (as Horace says)* in their place.² The mind should often yield to such diversions so that in due course, its strength recovered, and refocused on its business, it may with increased scope and vigour return at once to more serious matters. All the tauter is the bowstring which we stretch anew after it has been slackened. *Socrates did not disdain to play with children; Cato soothed with wine a spirit vexed by public affairs; and Scipio would move that heroic and martial body of his to musical measures.* All this is justly observed, and Seneca makes it a feature of his book throughout.[†] It is a pity that this cornice rests upon badly timbered buildings (*On Tranquillity of Mind*) supported by rotten foundations (Self-Love). Believe me when I say that they cannot support it. We set such a cornice on a dwelling that does not undermine it, whose roof is in good repair, and whose foundation is God. You, Seneca, want to relax yourself³ in order to shake off

* Horace, *Odi* IV, 12, 28: "dulce est desipere in loco."

† Seneca, *De Tranquillitate Animi*, Chapter 17, § 4.

your burden of care, to shake it off in case it should interfere with that tranquillity, or rather Freedom of yours that you have so dearly longed for above all things: this is your only purpose. But *we* want to relax ourselves⁴ so that in due course we can extend ourselves, we want to be equal to the task of supplying ourselves with our daily bread; we want our daily bread in order to live; we want to live because God wants it; and we shall not want it for a moment longer when we find out that He no longer wants it. And though we do not do those things for the sake of our Freedom, our doing them makes for our Freedom. If we do them, we shall be free; we shall not if we do them in order to be free. If we were to do them in order to be free, we would as a result not be free but enslaved to ourselves, than which there is no harsher and more miserable servitude. To what end, then, should we look, and direct our course? To obey God; this is our end, this is enough for us.

[2] Nevertheless, what I insisted on before, that the whole structure must be kept in balance, I now continue to insist on.⁵ If the jutting out of one of its upper storeys makes the entire dwelling-place of Virtue distorted and unsafe, how much more distorted and unsafe will it become if a too extensive and extravagant cornice,⁶ which should have been merely decorative, is instead burdensome; and with the walls, by which it should be supported, sinking under its vast and ugly mass, does it not threaten ruin? Likewise, one should play the fool among friends (as the saying goes) only so much as is necessary for being wise; the mind should be relaxed only so much as is required for it to be capable of being better stretched; one should indulge in pleasure only in proportion to the torpor, melancholy, and other things that in the course of our duties entangle us with impediments that have to be overcome. To seek anything beyond this is again to seek oneself, and to descend from the Parnassus of Virtue, a descent so much the more hazardous by how much higher we have ascended.⁷

[3] But Philaretus has now been eyeing me for a long time; he looks as if he would like to interrupt me.⁸ *What, he enquires, is there to choose now between the vicious and the virtuous, if both indulge in pleasure? If they equally sport, revel, carouse? I thought indulging in their pleasure was for the vicious, while the virtuous restrain their pleasure.* Indeed,⁹ Philaretus, the virtuous and the vicious often differ little in their external actions; but their minds differ immensely in their modes of thought. Vicious

men indulge themselves in pleasure *for its own sake*; virtuous men *for a reason*; vicious men because *it is their good pleasure*, virtuous men because *God commands it*. And you have rightly observed, Philaretus, that the virtuous restrain their pleasure.¹⁰ I shall commend to you an unexpected and marvellous saying: When a virtuous man indulges in his own pleasure, it is then that he restrains his pleasure the most; for he does not indulge in his pleasure because he likes it (he will rather despise it), but because it is his duty. And just as someone who visits a doctor in order to obtain medicine does not do so in order to drink medicine but to get well; and likewise a merchant voyaging (let us say) to the Indies, who when a storm blows up casts his merchandise into the sea, does not do so for the sake of casting it away, but in order to save himself; so a virtuous man, who indulges in pleasure only out of obedience to God (and will not otherwise indulge in it), is said not to indulge in his own pleasure, but to obey God, and can very well and truly be said to restrain his pleasure.

[4] But I see that on the contrary Philaretus stands ready to remonstrate with me:¹¹ *Such things are learned, subtle, and fitted rather to the Schools than to life. Tell me, pray, who now will be virtuous? When someone sets out to feather his own nest, to dance, to play the fool, you will plead as an excuse that it is according to God's precept (and you yourself said that it is God's). How can a follower of your teaching now distinguish the virtuous from the vicious, when you mix them up together and confuse them?* Fine words, Philaretus, fine words! When the vicious simulate virtue, they are all the more vicious for simulating it and being hypocritical. They cite the divine laws as a pretext for depravity and dissipation, but how does this help them? It is rather a pretext for infamy. But shall we not then find it impossible to unmask these hypocrites?¹² What concern is that of ours? We have no difficulty telling when we ourselves are masked; in that case it is our concern. Nevertheless, Philaretus,¹³ if we prescribe a pattern for living that is austere, rigid, and constrained, with no room for relaxation (which is against our Obligation), do you think that you will now be able to distinguish between the virtuous and the vicious? You would be wrong: in this the vicious simulate and dissimulate more skilfully than ever. That gloomy ballet, with its sorrowful countenance, wrinkled brow, glaring eyes, and narrow censure of all that is best, is one that masked hypocrites dance to the life today as much as of yore. But inflamed by strong wine, they reveal their true colours; for as it is rightly said: *In vino*

veritas. * Only a virtuous man, who never hides his true colours, comes out well here: he alone preserves dignity and propriety, only he will not disgrace himself (as Seneca remarked of dancing Scipio) even if his enemies are watching. But if need be, the virtuous and the vicious can easily be told apart,¹⁴ even in the course of such diversions and relaxations of the mind. For although the virtuous and the vicious may do the same, they do so differently: the virtuous will not act unless they are bidden, but the vicious will act even if they are forbidden; the virtuous have something else in mind, the vicious just that very thing; the virtuous are like passers-by, heading somewhere else, the vicious like residents who want to stay; the virtuous seize pleasure, the vicious are seized by it. Do you think that all this can be dissimulated, Philaretus? Can nothing of it escape from the eyes, the mouth, the hands, the whole circuit of the body?

[5] And so these are the laws that direct my leaving this life and my presence here, and prescribe for me the rules of living and dying. My departure, or death, is governed by these first two Laws: (1) *Not to depart reluctantly when I am called*; (2) *Not to depart at all, unless I am called*. My presence here, or life is governed by the three (or four) remaining Laws: (3) *To refresh my body*; (4) *To pursue some settled course of life*; (5) *While I am here, to suffer many things, and to do many things*; (6) *Amongst other things, frequently to relax my mind*.

§ 10. *Seventh Obligation*

[1] It remains only to enquire¹ whether there is yet another Law of Humility which governs my coming into this world, that is, *my birth* (for *to be born* is not for me to emerge into the light, but to be joined to a body, and to enter the World, the World in which I already was when I was enclosed in my mother's womb).² Is there not, then, some Law of Humility that could govern my *birth*? Clearly, there is,³ namely, *that I should look upon my birth as a good, never detest it, and never lament it. I must not rage with madness and impotence that I am punished by having been born. I must not revile those who engendered my body; much less (something that I cannot contemplate without horror) Him who committed*

* Latin saying, included in Grynaeus, 450.

me to my body, and by so miraculously joining me to it, made it *mine*.⁴ I must not number myself with the fools (though they pass for *wise men* with the vulgar, because they seem more splendidly insane than themselves) who say: *Not to be born is best; next to this, to die as soon as possible*. On the contrary, it is for the best that I was born, for the best because the Best of Beings wanted it. But death does not seriously concern me: it will then be for the best when He who is the Best will want it.

[2] Yet there is this boundless ocean of miseries,⁵ on which I presently toss. I am hurled from one calamity to another,⁶ only to sink back as often as not from the latter to the former. For if the incessant collisions of bodies in this world damage some part of *my* body (as can all too easily happen), and it is either hurled to the ground by the surrounding ether (in which case I say that I *fall*), or dissolved by the excited particles and the inrushing hail of the bodies that surround it (in which case I say that I *burn*), I necessarily feel pain.* And if the part that is damaged controls sensation or movement, then either of them, or their right use, deserts me. When my eye is hurt, I lose my sight, or cannot see well; when my tongue is hurt, I stammer, or am deprived of speech. And when the fire that burns continually in my heart is in danger of being extinguished (which again can easily happen through the interruption of its blood supply or the constriction of its valves), when I am afflicted by disease, that is, by imminent death, when I am about to expire, I tremble with mortal dread, I languish with incredible sadness, I am crushed and constricted by intolerable anguish. But there are even worse things:⁷ my mind gropes in a cloud of *unknowing*, my spirit is beset with *vice*. *An ignorant mind*: a mind that disdained to seek what it should have known, and could easily have known; a mind that preferred to go on the trail of alien and superfluous things that are of no concern to me, as a result of which I am alike ignorant of what concerns me and what does not. Into the former I do not enquire: no wonder I am ignorant of them. The latter I could have learned only out of knowing the former, and how could I know anything when I do not even know myself and things that concern me?

* Geulincx' mechanical explanations of gravity and combustion echo those found in René Descartes' *Principia Philosophiae* of 1644.

A depraved spirit, motivated by self-love, rabidly craves all things for itself with insatiable desire, subordinates all things to itself, grasps all things for itself; and wanting to serve even God for its own selfish sake,⁸ calls this service *piety*. It does not serve the Divine Laws, which its darkened mind, on recovering its senses a little and its health somewhat, had glimpsed, and which it had embraced and received into itself. Though it has sworn by them, it still dares to contravene them all the time; in fact, it does not act on them for a single day. This inconstancy of purpose of my mind, this levity, this lack of faith, have through my experiences⁹ day in day out become as well known to me as it is possible to be; nor will my mind reform itself, no matter how solemn an oath it swears. It will not reform itself so long as I linger here. That is unfortunate: the splendid mendacities with which it has continually duped me impair the faith that it proposes even now.

[3] Why do so many and such great calamities conspire against me?¹⁰ Have I offended God in some way?¹¹ Thrust into a body as if into a prison, am I paying the penalties that I have deserved, and among others this grave one, that I am oblivious of the offence that I am expiating? Someone who is being beaten can at least take comfort in knowing why he is beaten. Did one of my parents, or grandparents, or perhaps the first man,¹² offend God? Did he devolve that unhappy inheritance upon me and his other descendants, whom I see thrashing about in the same maelstrom? I seem to have learned from experience that certain bodily defects, in fact even defects of mind and spirit, may be transmitted by parents to their children, and are as it were handed down to them.¹³ But perhaps these are calamities only to complainers and self-interested persons, not to the humble, who have pledged themselves entirely to God.¹⁴ That very depravity of mind, and transgression of the Divine Law seem to be transformed into calamity and defect by those who have never made it their own by approving and assenting to it, but by means of a life of penitence and asceticism have shaken it off as often and as soon as it has taken hold, and then removed it as far as possible from themselves with the aid of the greatest possible spiritual strife, and a resolve to sin no more.¹⁵ For the time being I shall not enquire into such things:¹⁶ I touched upon them,¹⁷ as they had occurred to me in passing, and I had often heard tell of them. I shall not enquire into them for the time being, because Humility has not as yet afforded

me any guidance on the question.¹⁸ Humility does not command me to enquire into them, but to accept whatever we find as good. It is good that I was born, or born thus, because God wanted me to be born, and to be born thus. How it came about that I was born in this way, I do not dwell upon; I just assent to His will, and because He wanted me to be born, it pleases me that I was born in any way at all. Are these things therefore not to be questioned?¹⁹ I reply that they are not to be questioned here.²⁰ Nor even elsewhere?²¹ I shall look into them elsewhere, as they are out of order here.

[4] And so, to speak²² of those Obligations with which I have pledged myself wholly to God, and pledge myself again, I say again, I give myself wholly to him. That I was brought into this life (I approve of this because He brought me into it);²³ that I am leaving this life (I want to leave²⁴ when He says so, I do not want to leave if He does not say so); that I live this life (I want to live²⁵ because He has ordered it, I want to labour²⁶ that I may eat). If there is any other Obligation incumbent upon me, when I become aware of it I shall follow it as well and as promptly as any other Obligation. Otherwise, if I allow a law to be imposed on me which I do not know to have been laid down by God,²⁷ which I merely suspect may have been laid down by Him, or believe what I am told by others, or fashion it out of the irresponsibility of my desires, I shall obey not God (which I ought to do to the exclusion of everything else), but my own opinions, my frivolity,²⁸ and my stupidity. Then I shall be worshipping not God but (so to speak) a graven image. I shall be worshipping myself, and everything that is most depraved in myself, I shall be a slave to my conceits, my playthings, I shall assiduously scratch and pick at that scab which the gross injustice of the world has raised on me. My Master does not mutter to me, He does not whisper into my ear that I must hesitate, or doubt whether He commands anything, and if so, what. What He wants me to do, He intones in a lordly manner. I would hear it well enough, but for the impatient clatter and drumming of my desires. He is not ignorant of my tongue, He does not speak to me through an interpreter, or, being absent, by courier. If he should decide to advise me of my duties through others,²⁹ He gives them a signal (Reason) that is beyond doubt, so that even in this case it is He rather than they who speaks to me, which He does not regard as beneath His dignity. An idle and foolish servant, who fails in his duty, and goes to

do what, at night, he dreamt his master commanded; or in broad daylight goes dancing and capering in public because some trickster has told him his master wants it: what if his master should return, and if his master had expressly commanded him not to obey the orders of anyone but himself? Then he really is a worthless servant, and deserving of the pillory.

§ 11. *The Adminicle of Humility*

[1] This will be the most excellent Adminicle of Humility, firmly to direct our mind to refer nothing of what we do or do not do to our Happiness, but everything to our Obligation. Let us accordingly concentrate and discipline our mind; let us so enclose it in the circle of its Obligations that it cannot leap across and be carried over into the desires and devotions of its own glory and happiness. Let us forsake these inauspicious standards behind which with such great pomp, such great consent and concourse, so many impediments and burdens of studies and counsels, the human race marches. Day and night they seek Happiness; it is the Palladium for whose capture they compete; on this expedition they set forth with great but ineffectual steps of devotions and appetites. Nor are they ashamed of such disgraceful service, or rather servitude: of their own accord, and without being prompted, all sorts and conditions of men declare themselves to be of this camp, vulgar and Philosophers alike. Their watchword is public, and in the mouths of all: *Let us be happy and prosper!* They swear this oath;¹ but let us forswear it. Never was Happiness conquered under this slogan; in fact, from no other cause than that they all want to be happy and blessed they are all unhappy and miserable.² Happiness is like a shadow: it flees from you when you pursue it; but pursues you when you flee from it. But you should be aware that it may not always pursue you when you flee; for if you learn cunning in the ways of Happiness and flee from it in order that it may pursue you, it will not pursue you. To flee from Happiness for such a reason is not to flee from it, but to pursue it. No-one ever attained Happiness by doing something to attain it, certainly not one who craftily flees this Amazon with a view to inducing her in the Parthian manner to pursue him, and by fleeing would capture her as she pursues him, or (what he perhaps thinks more pleasant) to be captured by her. A truly humble mind, having not only

submitted to, but immersed itself in its Obligations, to which it is held fast by the Divine Law, beyond concern with its feet, with which it might advance towards Happiness, beyond concern with its hands, with which it might seize Happiness, beyond concern with its heart, with which it might aspire to Happiness, beyond concern with its mouth, with which it might summon Happiness, beyond concern with its eyes, with which it might aim at Happiness, beyond concern with its brain, with which it might think to pursue Happiness, at least in its dreams—only such a mind (I say), so immersed in the waters of its Obligations, so involved, so profound, is capable of Happiness. Happily it conceals itself, and happily it is found by that Happiness from which it had so happily concealed itself. It alone flees happily, and happily comes upon that from which it fled.

[2] To be sure, I do not mean that a virtuous man should drive away Happiness with sticks and stones, and if it will not go away, batter it to death.³ That is monstrous, savage, and indeed impious. God awards you a prize: is this how you accept it? You would be the worst kind of scoundrel, and for that very reason unworthy of that prize which alone is the insignia of Virtue. I wanted to say, rather, that while Happiness is not to be snared, not to be relentlessly hunted down, neither should we refrain on purpose from hunting Happiness down in the hope that it may inadvertently fall into our nets when we seem to be otherwise engaged.⁴ These are still the arts of the chase, and to refrain from the chase in such a manner is but to hunt in a sophisticated and subtle manner. Hence, *to flee Happiness* means to me *not to lay a trap for Happiness either*. Let me briefly essay the Scholastic style, for the benefit of those who find what is written in this style easier to understand. I must crawl for a little while (this is what these sacred rites boil down to) before I may arise afresh. *We must conduct ourselves in a merely negative way towards our Blessedness; that is, we must neither do, nor refrain from doing anything on account of acquiring Blessedness, but do what God commands, merely because He commands it, and not do what God forbids, merely because He forbids it; and to abide by this, so that our every act and omission to act may proceed from the motive of Obedience, and never from the motive of Concupiscence. We can, of course, conduct ourselves in a speculative way towards our Blessedness, but never in a practical way; that is, we may turn our mind to observing and predicting what Blessedness may fall to us if we do this or that, but we may not do this or that with a view to being blest. This expressly contradicts the*

foundation of Humility, that is, the second part of Humility, which we discussed earlier, according to which we are commanded to renounce ourselves, and everything that is ours, and consign ourselves entirely and completely to God. And whoever believes that God commands us in Scripture to work for the sake of our eternal Blessedness, works for the sake of his own eternal Blessedness only because God (as he sees it) commands this. To work for the sake of one's own eternal Blessedness in this way is not strictly to work for the sake of it, but for the sake of God's command, which it presupposes.⁵ A servant on his master's orders (or who at least sincerely believes that these are his master's orders) does something of service to one of his neighbours: I say that that servant, by so doing, serves not the neighbour, but his master, because the servant's whole motive is his master's will, not the benefit or convenience of the neighbour. Likewise also, the motive of the man of whom I just spoke is not his Blessedness, but God's will. Accordingly, he is said to act absolutely for God's sake, and not for the sake of himself or his Blessedness. But he must make sure that he honestly means it, and does it with his heart, not his mouth, as in such matters one can easily be taken in by one's own desires.

[3] Nevertheless, no-one seems to have reason to think about his Happiness,⁶ or deliberate about it in a purposeful manner, unless he has gained the summit of things, or is at least confident of his ability to mount up to it. (Does anyone presume to dispute this? Well, apart from Briareus and such fables.* I seem to myself to see as if through a cloud a certain Tyrant, preening himself, and devising and imagining for himself something of this kind. Absurdly! A little head emptier than any pumpkin! But what need is there for indignation! You are not worthy of it. Hellebore! Reach for the Hellebore immediately: I mean, *Know Thyself*, and regain your sanity.)[†] But as for all the rest, who are under the government and power of another, let them first labour concerning their Obligations, let them take counsel of the Oracle of Reason, and then when they have ascertained what they should do, it will be right for them to do as it says. And when they have done so,⁷ the greatest Happiness, as much as they

* Briareus was one of the Hecatonchires, giants with a hundred arms who helped Zeus in his battle against the Titans. Cf. Homer, *Ilias* I, 402–406.

† The plant *Helleborus niger*, Black Hellebore or Christmas Rose, was thought to cure mental diseases. It was also known as *Melampodium*, after Melampus, the shepherd who is said to have found the drug. Geulincx refers to Melampus below, page 60 where he uses 'Hellebore' allegorically to refer to the Inspection of Oneself.

can grasp, will come to them unsought. Now these things are quite obvious to anyone for whom it is no grave matter to turn his mind to them and fix his mind on them for a time. What, then, is the cause of that common and widespread, but quite perverse, insanity, or rather impotence, that makes men believe that they should first look after their Happiness and keep it in view; and then determine to enquire and deliberate what it is that will lead them and bring them to what they are aiming at? This is how it happens that (at least for a while), even if they may be so fortunate as to find both where Happiness is, and what makes for its pursuit, they may yet unfortunately be led astray, because this should not have been their goal. But what, in the end, is the cause of this error?⁸ I take it to be as follows.⁹ Man is entirely diffused outside himself, mixed with a body, distracted, and dispersed; he collects himself with difficulty, with difficulty he withdraws into himself, in order to view himself there, view himself as subject to God, and so subject to God that no-one can conceive of anything so degraded and obnoxious. So long as man is inclined to stray outside himself, and diffuse himself into the sensations that cause him to be extended somewhere outside himself, absolutely nothing strikes him as superior to, or even equal to humanity. It is obvious to him that humanity excels everything else that is the object of the senses, while other things, things that evade the senses, are silent to yon vagabond, are mute, and of little account. That is the drug;¹⁰ and this is the madness that proceeds from the drug. He now seems to himself to be able to imagine himself at the summit of Happiness. To him the rest of his kind seem to be in a stupor: all he has to do is excel his fellow men, and he will be perfect. With that in view, he will compel some of them to yield to him (threatening wars and strife); others he will persuade to yield (offering blandishments and favours). Others still, in case they should delay his ascent to perfection, he will undermine; others he will ensnare with deceptions, or secure their support with favours; he will entertain us with many such Comedies or Tragedies. And these excesses will not be banished, he will not regain his right mind, until he has eaten and digested that Hellebore which divine Melampus has planted in our soil.* A medicine distasteful to those who are not used to it, I admit,¹¹ and which the ignorant say

* See the previous footnote.

is for humouring rather than dispelling madnesses. In proportion to how it is applied, it acts powerfully to cleanse whatever black bile¹² it finds in the brain. By its use truth is rendered more agreeable, and pleasanter than by any Lotus-blossom. The more they taste it, the more of it they consume each day, the more they are attracted by it, and the sooner they come to look upon it not as a medicine, but as something more like food;¹³ and words cannot express how much their mind may be enlarged and invigorated by such food. This field of enquiry extends over several acres of the parish of my Book, or (because each one is small) several pages, namely, the pages of the *Inspection of Oneself*. But Philaretus,¹⁴ if you revisit that happy field which you have already once traversed, you will harvest there the means whereby you may lay up abundant store of provisions, of wholesome and tasty food, or health-giving medicine. Meanwhile, from this hill that I have ascended¹⁵ for the purpose of seeing that field from afar off I must descend to the road from which I have detoured, and continue on my way. These roads are all safe. Follow when you are done. Farewell.¹⁶

[4] Happiness should not be summoned, but neither should it be kept away: one must await it, not strive for it. When it thrusts itself upon you, you may embrace it; when God brings it to us, it is right to make use of it; it is fitting to accept what He sends us. Accept, I say, in a spirit of gratitude,¹⁷ acknowledging the gift of a gracious Lord.¹⁸ The chaste delights of a mind dedicated to God, of a mind sworn to God's Law, and completely forswearing itself; chaste delights (why go on repeating the name of a thing, when the thing itself cannot be expressed by saying it?), dear delights, pure, generous delights. No-one can begin to be acquainted with such joys unless he rejoices in them: these joys are all joys of the heart.¹⁹ Happy he, whom these joys console, whom they soothe, whom they pacify and placate! Happy he, who embraces these joys, yet does not embrace himself ahead of them! For if I were to pursue Virtue²⁰ in order that I might overflow with these joys, then I would pursue not Virtue, but these joys:²¹ then I would listen not to Reason, but to myself; then I would wish not to obey God, but for God to obey me. If so, I would not even attain the joys that I pursue, for they are joys, not enticements; they are graces, not procurements; and rewards that follow the love of God, not self-love. I preferred to rejoice in myself rather than obey (for I wished to obey so that I might rejoice):²² therefore, I

loved myself more than God. By what right then, or rather by what effrontery, do I demand a reward from Him? And if (as I know) these joys desert me while I am enjoying them, there is still no reason why I should be discontented, no cause for sadness or complaint. For it is necessary that one of these two should hold: either that I cultivated Virtue on account of the joys that are wont to accompany it; or, those joys having been of secondary importance, that I did what I did out of regard for the Divine Law.²³ If the latter, why am I distressed that what I did not pursue did not pursue me? If the former, then I am not frustrated; for I did nothing that had any bearing on that to which I tendered my devotion. I wished for joy, and so cultivated Virtue; but those wilful flowers of pleasure that my vanity longed to pluck from it do not grow in this garden. No-one is indignant if the public have not voted him the highest honours and authority in the state in return for scratching his head (for scratching one's head is not something that brings honours and authority). Likewise, Virtue does nothing more towards the attainment of lasting pleasure, if it is cultivated in order to bring pleasure to the cultivator.²⁴ Even in ancient times the more cunning pleasure-seekers approved of no pleasure that was obtained through study and art.²⁵ But all those who seek it in this way seek it in vain: and the more artfully they seek it the more ridiculously they fail.²⁶ But how then can we obtain pleasure for ourselves if we are banned from applying either study or negligence in obtaining it? Strike out this whole Question from your account: it is completely the wrong question. Join with me in rooting the mind so deeply in its Obligations that no stem may shoot out from which pleasures, comforts, and everything else that is wont to regard itself, and seems to constitute its Happiness, may sprout and draw sustenance from the mind.

§ 12. *The Fruit of Humility*

[1] Humility carries her fruit¹ in a box;² but O! let her not unlock it! Those (too eager and incautious) who have wanted this box to be opened for them prematurely have brought upon themselves every kind of calamity, every kind of sickness of mind and often also of body.³ What, then, is that so extraordinary poison in Pandora's Box which can diffuse itself into the air in whatever available way with such a foul and pestilential miasma? The loftiest, most excellent

heights to be attained, the highest happiness to be achieved: are these poisons? Yes,⁴ poisons, if you strive for them;⁵ but if you bear with them just as they are and are circumscribed by the barriers of your Obligations, you may leave to God the whole business of your being borne up or cast down by your happiness and misfortune respectively. Being humble, you have surrendered yourself to the All-Highest;⁶ you are His (and you cannot now be anyone else's).⁷ How sublime you are! In abandoning yourself, you have chosen to love Him who is Almighty; He in turn loves you (for He, in his generosity, cannot do otherwise).⁸ How happy you are! You love Him with Obedient Love (this is all you can do);⁹ He in turn loves you with Benevolent and Beneficent Love (for He in turn can do no more for you).¹⁰ You love in your own little measure (for you are a man); He in turn loves in His own measure, which is immeasurable (because He is God). And these are the things that may be said by the way concerning this fruit of Humility,¹¹ which on account of the importance of the subject I shall pursue at greater length when I come to deal with the Reward of Virtue.

But mark: I did not say that *the Humble first love God, and are then loved in return by God*. Certainly not, I did not say this, and this should suffice. It is just that sycophants have so much power over the unlearned (their slaves) that not to say something is often not enough unless you also say that you are not saying it: men of this kind rejoice in being in servitude to other men.

[2] But behold! A sudden twist in the plot!¹² Humility has cut out the tongue of Diligence,¹³ plucked out the eyes of Obedience,¹⁴ mixed I do not know what kind of hemlock for Justice,¹⁵ for they have all grown rigid, and cannot be flexed in any part. It is well for my Philaretus to continue to abide in the fields of Melampus:¹⁶ I would be embarrassed¹⁷ if at this Tragedy he were to find fault with me from a seat in the auditorium. But even so, Spectators, these Goddesses are fair: in fact, they are fair for this very reason.¹⁸ See how charming they are! How neat! How this condition becomes them! The wounds which these sisters have received from their sister breathe out pure grace; but are they wounds, or rather adornments? The speechless and mute one, how placid she is! How peaceful! How gracefully she keeps silent! How gracefully she flees our chatter and business! And how unhurried is the one without sight! And that she is so unhurriedly led by a venerable old man (Her parent?¹⁹ Seemingly),

how pious it is! And the one so rigorous, is she not still vigorous? With sublime lips, and shapely body, is she not wholly bountiful and filled with majesty? Look: what do you see but the Three Graces?

But what kind of commotion do I hear? Our Philaretus' brother,²⁰ who seems to be down there in the audience, is abusing me: with annoyance he complains that I hold office without a popular mandate;²¹ that I have introduced Goddesses onto the Stage; and not disguised, as others have done, but as their very own selves; that I have made his Tutelary Spirits into actresses. I have not done so; I have not produced them; I have let them be themselves. They were in their shrine, in their Theatre: this is why it seemed right to them, as you have just seen, to put on a show for us. And these Goddesses do not profanely act out fables, but occupy themselves with sacred mysteries.²² I am a Mystagogue: I shall unfold these mysteries to you; but only (it would be unlawful to do otherwise) once you have been initiated.

TREATISE II
ON THE VIRTUES COMMONLY
CALLED PARTICULAR

INTRODUCTION

Virtue is one and unique. When, therefore, we speak of a plurality of virtues, we do not mean virtue considered abstractly and in itself, but the offices of virtue, which are the effects towards which virtue is inclined. For if *virtue* is the intention of doing what Reason dictates (as I showed in the first Treatise), it must always be inclined to do something, which we call its *office*. These offices are very diverse: virtue may be inclined towards meeting some expense, and in relation to this office is called *liberality*. It may be inclined towards sparing some expense, and is accordingly called *frugality*. Inclined towards conversation and humour, it is called respectively, *courtesy* and *wit*. Inclined to judge seriously and gravely, it is called *severity* and *gravity*. When virtue is concerned with prosperity, it assumes the character of *temperance*, when concerned with adversity, *fortitude*. Thus, it endlessly clothes and reinvents itself to meet this or that circumstance, signalling their diversity by assuming correspondingly many diverse names. But in all of these guises it remains one and the same.

And the *Cardinal* virtues are inseparable from the office that virtue informs, as they are necessarily presupposed by every such office. But the *Particular* virtues are separable, and one can conceive of an office of virtue in which this or that particular virtue is not found. Just as in the office of liberality frugality does not appear, so neither in the office of frugality should liberality play a part, any more than severity should be present in the office of courtesy. The *Cardinal* virtues are therefore the properties of virtue when it is going about its office and business, which in consequence virtue can never be without whenever it discharges one of its offices and functions; while a *Particular* virtue is an accident of virtue when it is going about its office, from which ongoing virtue it is accordingly possible to

separate and distinguish it. All of this will become clearer in what follows shortly.

The *Cardinal* virtues are nothing other than virtue in general going about any of its offices, while the *Particular* virtues mean virtue going about this or that office in some determinate way. For example, *liberality* is virtue meeting some expense, and *frugality* virtue abstaining from expense. However, virtues are also regarded as particular in advance of any office, and not so much going about it as ready to go about it if the occasion should arise. Accordingly, people who do not meet any actual expense, but would meet it if the occasion arose, if the material or field of activity should be at hand, and if there were something to give and someone to whom to give it, may also be considered *liberal*; and similarly may be considered *frugal* when they presently meet great expense, but will not meet it if circumstances change. And in this sense, in a virtuous man all the particular virtues coexist. He is both *strong* and *mild*, *courteous* and *severe* at the same time, likewise *liberal* and *frugal*, and so on. But in another sense, a virtuous man may have one particular virtue (that is, when he executes some particular office of virtue), but lack others (that is, when he is not for the time being discharging their offices). The latter sense is better and stricter, as we do not strictly speaking say that someone lacks a virtue when he does not execute the office which that virtue must inform, because the matter or instruments are lacking; just as we do not consider a craftsman to be devoid of his art when he lacks the instruments or materials with which he creates it; and he who lacks brush, canvas, and pigments is still seen as a painter. It is the same with a virtuous man when he has nothing to give and no-one to whom to give it.

Therefore, this Treatise II has three parts. However, if you would like each part to consist of four subsections, this makes four parts: Part I, on *Particular Virtues in general*, which is made up of the first four subsections; Part II, on *Particular Virtues concerning ourselves*, namely, *temperance and fortitude*; Part III, on *Particular Virtues concerning God*, namely, *piety and religion*; and Part IV, on *Particular Virtues concerning others* (whom Christians call their *neighbours*), namely, *justice and equity*.

PART I

On Particular Virtues in general§ 1. *The Office of Virtue*

An *Office of Virtue* is an object of obedience, that is, the act and work to which the virtue is inclined. Virtue is an intention of acting; the acting that emanates from this intention is Obedience; and the act itself we call an Office. We should not be deterred by the fact that others have given these words different senses: it is the right of anyone making a definition to say what he would like to signify by a name, even though others may want it to mean something else.

It is clear from this definition of an Office that Virtue itself must also be numbered among the Offices of Virtue; for we make the intention of doing what Reason dictates into the selfsame intention of doing what Virtue dictates; and just as the pleasure with which something delights us in itself delights us, so the intention with which we propose and decide to do something becomes in itself for us something intended. Hence, we should take great care here, lest prior to the intention in which Virtue consists we devise for ourselves certain inducements and enticements with which Reason may induce and invite us into the intention of deciding to do what Reason dictates. This would be to overturn Virtue entirely, and abandon it in favour of self-love, which we made it our business in Treatise I to exclude and guard against. All these inducements and invitations can result in nothing but Passionate Love. Whatever comes of this love is sinful, and leads to Intemperance, as we shall see in the subsection on Temperance. Therefore, if Virtue should require Reason to lead us to obey Reason with inducements and invitations, it will necessarily involve Lust and Intemperance: in other words, Virtue would be not Virtue, but Vice, which is altogether absurd. The intention of obeying Reason comes first, and is somehow born of itself: it is both the whole of Virtue and an Office of Virtue.

From the foregoing we see also that an Office of Virtue is *internal* when it is discharged in the mind or soul, but *external* when it is diffused outside the mind into the body and other things. For even though we can effect nothing on external things (as we learned from the Inspection of Oneself in Treatise I), Virtue often dictates that

we should do as much as we can (that is, will effectively) to affect external things. This emerges clearly in the Obligation to nourish ourselves, etc. (see Treatise I).

It also follows clearly from the foregoing that an Office of Virtue is sometimes informed by Virtue, but at other times uninformed by Virtue, and as it were devoid of Virtue. So, for example, though to give lavishly and meet great expense is the Office of Liberality, it is not always informed by Liberality, but sometimes by Prodigality (spendthrifts also give lavishly and meet great expense), or even by Avarice (the avaricious will often give in order that you may give them more in return), or vanity and ostentation, or any other vice you care to mention.

An Office that is uninformed by, and devoid of Virtue, is often informed by character or wit, or by occasion or chance, or (and this occurs the most frequently) by some vice. Thus, many people refrain from injury or cruelty because they are by nature cowardly or pacific, and prone to pity—here the Office of Virtue is devoid of Virtue, and uninformed, inasmuch as it is informed by character and natural inclination. Some are liberal on occasion or by chance, when they have bequeathed to others what they have had to leave behind by dying (here the Office of Virtue is supplied by chance). But of how Vice sometimes plays the role of Virtue, I have already spoken.

To an Office we oppose *Default* (if one may so term it). This is the act and performance to which sin inclines. And it is quite clear that Virtue is often to be found in Default, and Sin in Office; the former through ignorance (as when a son slays his father, or his comrade-in-arms in a just war, believing him to be an enemy); the latter through dissimulation, malice, and perversity (as when someone bestows lavish gifts in order to conceal his avarice).

§ 2. *Virtue is individual*

The individual is what cannot be divided into parts. We therefore say that Virtue is individual because one virtue cannot be without another, but where there is one there must necessarily be all, and where some virtue is lacking there is no virtue.

Indeed, with the Cardinal Virtues this could not be clearer from the preceding Treatise, where I showed that Virtue, whenever it extends into its Office, necessarily keeps company with these four:

Diligence, Obedience, Justice, and Humility. With regard to the Particular Virtues, it is not so clear: in fact, in stating that one of the Particular Virtues cannot be present without the others, we seem here to be embracing the utterly false doctrine of the Stoics.* To the vulgar what seems more absurd than that someone who is light-hearted and witty must be also chaste, pious, and religious; and that someone who is grave and severe cannot be miserly and mean? But that is how things are: the vulgar are so burdened with the prejudices under which they labour that they confuse an Office of Virtue with Virtue. But on the contrary, the two are diverse, as emerged clearly enough from the preceding subsection, where I showed that they not only differ from one another (which is enough to make the distinction), but that each can be separated and distanced from the other; for an Office of Virtue is often without Virtue, and Virtue often without an Office—in fact is found with Default, as was sufficiently demonstrated there.

This is what moves the vulgar to believe that someone can be courteous who is not chaste, because they often see someone who fulfils the Office of courtesy but neglects the Office of chastity; which I do not deny, and concede that it is as clear as daylight; but that it follows that courtesy is distinct from chastity, this I emphatically deny. The one who in the case we considered pursues the Office of courtesy, but not of chastity as well, is really no more courteous than he is chaste, the Office of courtesy being with him uninformed, and devoid of that courtesy which is true Virtue. Why does he discharge the duties of courtesy? Is it because Reason urges it? Not at all; for Reason also urges, and with equal force, discharge of the duties of chastity: so why, if Reason moves him, does he embrace some, but put others aside? It follows that it is not Reason that

* Geulincx offers an account of this position at the beginning of § 4, below, where it is said that the maxim of the Stoics was ‘that all virtues are connected like the links of a chain, so that one cannot acquire one of them without the others; and whoever is capable of one of them is not deficient in the rest.’ Further on in the same passage, Geulincx gives his own opinion, saying that it is not the ‘Particular Virtues’ that are linked, but that Virtue itself is one. See below, 72–74. In Annotation 4 to Treatise I, Chapter I, § 2, 180, below. Geulincx also presents the idea of the unity of virtue, referring to the saying *Qui unam habet, omnes habet virtutes*, to which he fully agrees there, calling it a ‘paradox of the Stoics’. A grim illustration of the Stoic idea of the connection of all virtues is Seneca’s description of endurance under torture: Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 67, § 10.

impels him to the Office of courtesy, but his own inclination; in other words, he was courteous because it pleased him to be courteous, not because Reason dictated it; for Reason equally dictated that he should be chaste, which he was not willing to be.

Thus, just as, if two people have been equally recommended to me by a friend, and I give my attention to one, while neglecting the other, it is not the recommendation of my friend which has turned my attention this way, but choice, and my will; so, if two Offices have been enjoined on us by Reason, and we pursue the one but neglect the other, the outcome is due not to Reason, but inclination and our own well-being. Therefore, Virtue is not in such an outcome, nor the love of Reason, but pleasure or self-love.

Thus, the general reason why no Virtue can be distanced from another Virtue is because a most certain argument convinces us that a Virtue that could be distanced from another would be not a Virtue but pleasure, as is plain from the foregoing. And we can easily rid ourselves of the prejudice in which, along with the vulgar, we formerly laboured, now that we have made a good distinction between Virtue and its Office, a distinction that can be perceived by everyone. But men (as in so much else) labour in these prejudices from inadvertence rather than ignorance.

§ 3. *Virtue is equable*

That is, Virtues are equal among themselves, none is either greater or less than another. The vulgar see this as a monstrous paradox: as if (they say) it is not of greater virtue to serve your father than your servant; to defend the public than one citizen! But here they again err, and because of the same confusion as I have just explained, that is, confusion of an *Office* of Virtue with Virtue itself. Accordingly, I say that it is a greater office to serve your father than your servant; but I emphatically deny that the Virtue itself is greater. Some Offices are greater than others because they are more urgent, circumstances being such that when one has to be deferred, the latter will have to be deferred rather than the former. During a shipwreck your father and your servant may struggle at the same time to avoid drowning, but if only one of them can be snatched from the waves and rescued, who would hesitate to rescue one's father and defer rescuing one's servant?

And even though some Offices of Virtue may be greater and more urgent, nevertheless no Virtue is greater than another. If this were to be the case, the lesser Virtue would be not a Virtue but a Vice. The reason is that it is incumbent on us to do the best we can (which no-one denies who does not avert his gaze from the clear light of nature). If we did less, we would fall into Vice. The matter is beyond dispute. Suppose your father to be in danger at the same time as your servant (as I said earlier): if it is a superior Virtue to rescue the father, and an inferior Virtue to rescue your servant, this latter Virtue will be the sheerest infamy. To rescue your servant in that case, and to defer rescuing your father will strike no-one as being anything but infamous and unnatural. How incoherent it is, to have to concede that a Virtue can become a Vice! You ought to concede on the same principle that light can be darkness, heat cold, and in short, everything that you would describe as absurd.

But that an Office of Virtue may be informed by Vice, and indeed that this is very often the case, we should not find surprising, in view of what has already been explained in § 1. Accordingly, if in the course of rescuing your father (in the example just cited) you also defer rescuing your servant, you do not embrace a superior Virtue and abstain from an inferior one, but simply embrace Virtue and abstain from infamy. But if, on the contrary, you rescue your servant, while neglecting to rescue your father, you then really discharge not so much an Office of Virtue as an uninformed Office, devoid of Virtue and replete with infamy.

And in truth, for anyone who appreciates that nothing belongs to Virtue by chance, there can be no doubt about the equality of Virtues. For if one Virtue were superior to another, chance would determine whether I act for the best or fall short of it. Suppose that the opportunity arises for me to rescue my servant, my father not needing to be rescued (not being involved in any danger), and for you to rescue your father, or deliver the state, something that is not available to me because I am absent. Then you, through circumstance and good fortune, will be better than I. You will not be better in respect of Virtue; you will not even be better in an absolute sense (for it is Virtue alone that can make one both good and better, in whatever degree is involved; chance having no part in it). You see, then, the absurd consequences of this: namely, that you will be better than I, but not in Virtue; from which it follows that you will be at once better and not better.

And how utterly destructive is this belief of the vulgar that some Virtues are inferior, and some superior! For as a result they begin to count Virtue among the benefits of chance, a belief that, once established, dissipates the whole of Virtue, making those who are more fortunate begin to seem more virtuous to us. But this is to overturn the very foundations of Virtue. Accordingly, whether a virtuous man is the saviour of his country, or when at home is courteous and affable with his friends, he is equally virtuous. The former Office is to be sure greater than the latter, but it is not also a greater Virtue, inasmuch as the entire essence and nature of Virtue are comprehended in this one precept: *I wish to put into effect that alone which Reason dictates.*

§ 4. *Virtue is one*

This subsection is closely connected with the two preceding subsections; for if Virtue is *one* and simple, it must also be *individual*, as what is one and simple cannot be divided. However, it could possibly be individual without being simple, if all its parts, that is, the Particular Virtues, so closely cohered that they could not be distanced and abstracted from one another. This seems to have been the opinion of the Stoics, whose maxim was this: *that all Virtues are connected like the links of a chain, so that one cannot acquire one of them without the others; and whoever is capable of one them is not deficient in the rest.** Accordingly, to say that Virtue is *one* is to say no more than that it is individual. Likewise, from the unity of Virtue there also follows its *equability* (for what is one and self-identical is perfectly equable); but unity is not in turn implied by equability.

And that Virtue is indeed one is plain enough to anyone who correctly observes the distinction between Virtue and its Offices. For when all the Offices are considered apart by an operation of the mind, something one and simple appears which cannot be reduced to other things, namely, *the intention of doing what Reason dictates.* Even though this intention extends into many different Offices (inclining sometimes to giving, sometimes to withholding, sometimes to speaking, sometimes to keeping silent, sometimes to light-heartedness and

* See the note on page 69, above.

good cheer, sometimes to gravity and severity), it still means the same one and simple something in all of them, that is, acting in accordance with Reason. Or even if its intentions are (in Scholastic terms) diverse material objects, there is still a one and simple formal object, or one and simple moving cause, namely, *to do what Reason dictates*. But acts receive their diversity from the formal, not the material object. For example, that love is the same, with which a father is moved to castigate and console his son; for even though to castigate and to console are very different, they are still only objects, while the father's motive is one and the same; so that one and the same love illumines both Offices. There is no difficulty in applying the same principle to the love that constitutes Virtue.

Therefore, although Virtue is one, we are still accustomed to speak of a plurality of Virtues; but we are then thinking of the Offices of Virtue, and the diverse circumstances in which Virtue can be found.* And in order that we may subsume all those Particular Virtues under one general heading, we may consider Virtue as: (1) related to those Offices that touch upon us (and here we will find *temperance* and *fortitude*); (2) related to those Offices that touch upon God (and here we will find *piety* and *religion*); and (3) related to those Offices that touch upon other men. And under this last heading are to be found most of the names for Virtue, that is, Particular Virtues; for example, *liberality* and *parsimony*, *magnanimity* and *modesty*, *courtesy* and *gravity*, *clemency*, and *civil justice*, the last of which governs contracts, rewarding the good, and punishing the guilty; and many similar Virtues, which it would be impractical to list here. But it is convenient to reduce all of them to *justice* and *equity*, as will appear later. (And by *justice* we should understand not *Cardinal* but *particular justice*, as will become clear later on). And all these Particular Virtues are nothing but one and the same Virtue found in various circumstances; for the same intention which is called *temperance* in favourable circumstances is called *fortitude* in adverse circumstances, in giving, *liberality*, in withholding, *frugality*, in divine matters, *piety* and *religion*, in civil affairs, *equity* and *justice*, and so on.

This is what I meant when I stated in Treatise I, concerning *Disposition*, that the whole of Virtue can be acquired at once and straightaway. It does not take all day, and we do not have to await

* See the note on page 69, above.

the coming of swallows and summer breezes in order to pursue Virtue. It can be had now, at this very moment, and consists in this one precept: *I must do what Reason dictates.*

PART II

On Particular Virtues touching upon ourselves

§ 5. *Temperance*

Temperance is Virtue displayed in favourable circumstances. When Virtue finds itself amidst favourable circumstances, and attended by its four attributes (which are commonly known as Cardinal Virtues, and are inseparable from it) extends itself into its Office, it naturally assumes the form of Temperance. For if someone who is in favourable circumstances, with everything going his way (as they say), has a firm and effective intention of doing only what Reason dictates, and as a result of that intention listens carefully to whatever Reason may dictate, and pursues it when he has perceived it, and pursues only this, all care and consideration for himself set aside, then we can say that such a man is *perfectly temperate*.

From these observations it is quite clear that it is useless to devise in addition to the four Cardinal Virtues a new Virtue called *Temperance*, with a special Office moderating favourable circumstances (such as the Scholastics were wont to imagine). We see clearly from the foregoing that if Virtue is placed amidst favourable circumstances, accompanied only by the four Cardinal Virtues (which are never absent from it), then without any other external agency it naturally assumes the perfect character of Temperance; and it does so principally with the assistance of Humility. Accordingly, it is not inappropriate to define Temperance as *Humility in favourable circumstances*; just as Fortitude is similarly nothing other than *Humility in adverse circumstances*. Hence, those who introduce Particular Virtues, and make distinctions between them, *multiply entities without necessity*.

Favourable things are those that afford delight or pleasure: they can conveniently be divided into several classes.

The First Class relates to *the body*: favourable things of this kind afford bodily pleasure. First of all come health and well-being of

body, from which flow robustness, beauty, and keenness of senses; and agility and liveliness in the motion and exercises of bodily organs; all of which, beyond doubt, usually afford us great pleasure: in fact, without them, so long as we are men, and remain with our body, there can hardly be any genuine pleasure that does not have some admixture of sorrow. But in case you should conclude that a Virtuous Man cannot enjoy happiness without them, know that it is not the same to *rejoice in* or overflow with pleasant things, and to *live in blessedness*. He is blessed, whose determinations all arise out of his soul, who neither acts, nor suffers anything other than what he wishes; which can still be the case even if severe pain and other passions, such as Fear, Tedium, and so on, disturb the pleasure which would otherwise ensue on his happiness. (More on this when I come to the Reward of Virtue, and in particular, to Happiness itself).*

The Second Class relates to *animal pleasure*. In this we include, chiefly, the pleasures of the table and the couch (for these go with our animal nature); to which can be added things which fall somewhere in between this and the next Class, such as perfumes, music, and visual displays, or *amusement*: for while the two former pleasures relate to taste and touch respectively, these latter pleasures relate to the remaining senses.

The Third Class includes things that relate to *human pleasure*. Dignity and power are prominent here. Dignity consists in honours, offices, and public duties, the esteem and opinion of others, in reverence, applause, acclaim, processions, and in similar displays. For its part, power consists chiefly in wealth, credit, and numerous friends, and in popularity.

The Fourth Class includes things that afford *spiritual pleasure*, such as Virtue and Wisdom. The scope of Virtue is virtuous actions, Offices, and the exercises of Virtue; that of Wisdom, learning, arts, and sciences.

These are the four classes of things that are favourable in themselves; that is, in themselves and as if by the force of their own nature, they have the faculty of bringing us great delight and pleasure, especially those belonging to the two latter classes. For spiritual pleasures are more potent than human pleasures, human pleasures are more potent than animal pleasures, and animal pleasures are

* See below, Treatise V, § 2.

more potent than bodily pleasures, as we all know from consciousness and experience.

But some favourable things arise *by accident*; that is, they bring us pleasure not by the force of their own nature, but through habit or persuasion. We are in the habit of doing such things because, even though they may be at times more troublesome than agreeable, they will ultimately bring pleasure; just as people who have voyaged to the Indies through the greatest dangers, storms, and terrors, and in the highest degree of discomfort, will want to sail there over and over again. Similarly, persuasion can render anything at all agreeable to us. This is often the case with food, as we see from the example of the girl brought before Alexander the Great who relished a diet of spiders.*

Therefore, granted an abundance of all or most of these favourable things, it is for a temperate man to remain faithful to Reason, and to do, or refrain from doing, nothing on account of the pleasure it brings us, but to moderate all his Offices according to Reason.

The Aristotelians say that pleasure is to be moderated by temperance; but just how false this is will become clear when we come to speak of the Passions.

This alone makes a temperate man: to behave negatively towards pleasure, and neither to do, nor refrain from doing, anything on its account.

§ 6. *Intemperance and Stupor*

The Virtues, especially the Particular Virtues, consist in a mean between two extremes of vice, of which one departs from the mean through excess, the other through defect, as I showed in Treatise I. *Stupor*, as excess of Temperance, is at the opposite end to *Intemperance*,

* The legend is about a beautiful girl fed on snake poison, whom Aristotle advised Alexander to avoid. Cf. Antoine Mizaldus, *Memorabilium, utilium, ac iucundorum centuriae novem*, First Hundred, Number 59, Paris: Federicus Morellus, 1584, 9v. Geulincx may have remembered a passage from Giambattista della Porta, who retold the story in his *Magia Naturalis* of 1558 in a chapter in which he also discusses the consumption of spiders. Cf. Johannes Baptista Porta, *Magia Naturalis* IX, Chapter 14. Various editions of this work appeared in Leiden during the 1640s and 1650s, amongst which at least one Dutch edition: Jan Baptista Porta, *Magia ofte De wonderlijcke, seer lustighe, ende vermaeckelijcke Wercken der Naturen*, Leiden: Johannes Meyer, 1655, in which both passages occur in Book 2, Chapter 22, page 243.

or lack of Temperance. However, the majority of moral philosophers practically invert this order, as you can see in the same place.*

Intemperance is the pursuit of pleasure; *Stupor* is flight from pleasure. Temperance itself is neither pursuit nor flight from pleasure, but consists in being motivated by Office and Reason alone. *Stupor* is therefore excessive Temperance (Temperance despises pleasure negatively, but *Stupor* also positively); while the Intemperate man is insufficiently temperate (he craves pleasure, which the temperate man despises).

To begin with, there are two kinds of Intemperance, *Desire*, and *Intemperance proper*. *Desire* pursues absent pleasure, while *Intemperance* enjoys present pleasure, to which it wholly dedicates itself.¹ Again, Intemperance is known under diverse names corresponding to the diversity of favourable circumstances. Intemperance involving vigour, health, and suchlike things agreeable to our nature as living beings, is called *stolidity*: for example, Tacitus describes Agrippa as *raging with stolid vigour of body*.[†] Intemperance in respect of food and venery is said to be *brutal* and *bestial*: this is almost the only kind of Intemperance recognised by the Scholastics, as they judge other pleasures to be almost virtuous. But pleasure in itself is neither virtuous nor vicious: it is doing something, of whatever kind it may be, for the sake of pleasure, that is always vicious. Intemperance in Music, Amusement, and the use of Perfume can be described as *animal*: it is frequently also called *human*, and in this kind of Intemperance the vulgar see hardly anything wrong, and have no inhibitions about it, as Epicurus rightly observes (and on that he also rested the defence of his own school).[‡] Intemperance in respect of power and great state is deservedly

* See above, Treatise I, Chapter II, § 3 and Annotation 7, 211, below.

† Tacitus, *Annales* I, § 3.

‡ In his *Letter to Menoecus*, Epicurus expressly stated that ‘when we say pleasure is the goal we do not mean the pleasures of the profligate or the pleasures of consumption (. . .) but rather the lack of pain in the body and disturbance in the soul. For it is not drinking bouts and continuous partying and enjoying boys and women, or consuming fish and other dainties of an extravagant table, which produce the pleasant life, but sober calculation which searches out the reasons for every choice and avoidance and drives out the opinions which are the source of the greatest turmoil for men’s souls.’ Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* I, 131–132. Translation from Brad Inwood, L.P. Gerson and D.S. Hutchinson (eds.), *The Epicurus Reader. Selected Writings and Testimonia*, Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994, 30–31. Geulincx knew this passage, but seems to have based his opinion of Epicurus rather on the commentary tradition and especially on Cicero’s *De finibus bonorum et malorum*, agreeing

called *human*, the latter of the two being also known as *ambition*, the former *avarice*, taken in a more general sense. Intemperance in respect of science and knowledge is called *curiosity*; in respect of Virtue and the practice of Virtue, it called *vanity*.

Stupor is divided into four main classes. The first is extreme, or *Hypercynic* Stupor, the Stupor of those who, so far from pursuing pleasure, court torment and pain: I made mention of them in Treatise I, in the Section on Humility. In the next grade down comes *Cynic* Stupor: the Cynics hated all pleasant things alike, rejecting Rhetoric, Poetry, Music, Painting, and everything that might cause pleasure. This kind of Stupor does not court pain, but hates pleasure and everything pleasant. This is followed by *Stoic* Stupor: they did not hate pleasant things, but on the contrary conceded that they should sometimes be embraced, such as when the performance of an Office demands it; but pleasure and delight in themselves they did not value. This kind of Stupor, therefore, admits pleasant things, but excludes pleasure itself. In fourth place comes *Peripatetic* Stupor: they hated neither pleasant things nor pleasure in itself, but rather welcomed them, thinking merely that the parts of pleasure which would be excessive and seem too much should be abridged.² Accordingly, this kind of Stupor, the least stupid of all, admits both pleasurable things and pleasure itself, only it moderates pleasure and keeps it within bounds. Contrary to all this, the Temperate man does not avoid pain, does not court pleasure, and does not reject pleasure either in whole or in part, but leaving all these things as they are, and setting them at naught, does only what Reason dictates.

§ 7. *Fortitude*

Fortitude is *Virtue in adversity*. *Adversity* is what brings *pain*: under the heading of *pain* we should include fear, sorrow, and in general every emotion that affects us in a bad way.

Adverse things are divided into the same number of classes as favourable things: hence, disease, decrepitude, poverty, infamy, ignorance, error or delusion, sin, bad conscience, etc. are examples of

with Cicero that although Epicurus was a man of high morality, his philosophy was not. Cf. Geulincx' *Disputationes de summo bono* of 1668, in *Opera* III, 283–360. The quotation from the *Letter to Menoeceus* occurs at the bottom of page 338.

adverse things. Knowledge of all these is easily inferred from what was said about favourable things; as the knowledge of opposites is the same knowledge, it is clear enough that anyone who has familiarised himself with one side has ipso facto acquired knowledge of the other.

Fortitude is divided into *Patience* and *Fortitude* proper. *Patience* is *Virtue amidst incumbent adversity*, while *Fortitude* is *Virtue amidst imminent adversity*. When adverse circumstances are imminent, they inspire fear, horror, and despair; but when present and incumbent, they cause sorrow, affliction, and calamity. In particular, they cause calamity when they are present against our will, as is generally the case with Vicious men: such people are wont to bear adversity with a troubled mind, and would wish it to be gone. Calamity consists of such a conflict of will, being nothing other than a conflict between what is the case, and the will, which does not wish it to be the case. In contrast, to virtuous men adversity is never calamitous: their will is never in conflict either with things or with God; they never wish that what is, is not; so that though adversity may often cause them pain, fear, tedium, sorrow, and similar sensations and passions, it never causes calamity. The sensations and passions of calamity can have no place with those whose will is never in conflict with them, so that they never wish that such things were not so, but wish not to do only one thing, that is, to sin. They wish to do only one thing, that is, to obey God's law: whatever lies beyond this they hold as things indifferent, and do not wish to do them. But it should be noted that for that very reason those sensations and passions seem to the vulgar to be calamitous, as they are wont to suffer them with troubled minds, and to struggle against and resist them with all the force of their will; things in which, if you take no further action, you will find nothing calamitous at all. (See below for a broader discussion, when I come to deal with the Reward of Virtue, and in particular, with Happiness.) Accordingly, Fortitude regards fear and sorrow not with a view to moderating them (as the Peripatetics would have it), or driving them out (as the Stoics advocate), but to behave negatively towards them, and neither to do nor refrain from doing anything as a result of contemplating them. He is a man of Fortitude who in adversity (imprisonment, poverty, exile, isolation, bereavement, disgrace, not to mention sin and an unquiet spirit) does only what Reason dictates, listens only to Reason, obeys it alone, and is not concerned with himself, or moved by anxiety. And he does not

cease to be a man of Fortitude just because in the face of danger and imminent adversity (such as a shipwreck or execution) he grows pale, shakes, and trembles in all his limbs (as the vulgar mistakenly believe, and the Stoics in this respect even more than the vulgar Philosophers); for to tremble with fear and be horror-stricken are neither good nor bad so far as morals are concerned: they are bad only in a natural sense, inasmuch as they affect us badly. Of course, to do something out of compelling fear, or to flee, or wail, or otherwise desert one's post, is infamous, shameful, and cowardly, since these things are attributable not to Passion but to our action and assent.

But in addition, neither is he a man of Fortitude just because he is not distressed by imminent adversity, and does not fear it, but remains steadfast, or is not cast down by present adversities, is not sad, and does not weep; for this can arise from causes other than Virtue, such as innate hardness, or being inured to evils, by which he has become hardened against misfortune and mishap; and also from ostentation, vanity, lust for glory, and fear of disgrace. Therefore, there is nothing of Fortitude in outward display: Fortitude is a marriage of mind, to be consummated in the intention of doing what Reason dictates. For the rest, tears are sometimes shed by virtuous men in sorrowful circumstances, sometimes not; sometimes they turn pale amidst fearful things, sometimes not; they hold all these things indifferent, and set no store by them. Whether they turn pale or not, shed tears or not, they believe that it has nothing to do with them, they care for one thing only, which they are content to do with all their might, venturing nothing, committing themselves to nothing that Reason has forbidden. Much the same can be said on the question of Temperance: that is, a virtuous man does not cease to be temperate even though his heart leaps for joy, and his entire demeanour and expression diffuse wonderful mirth and rapture; neither is he a temperate man who amidst favourable circumstances represses his joy, and suppresses his mirth, as if to extinguish it. Just as with Fortitude, all this can arise from the vain longings of the soul.

§ 8. *Rage and Softness*

Rage is an excess, *Softness* a defect: in this the Scholastics and I are at one. *Rage* reacts to distress, *Softness* flees from it. Fortitude lies

in the mean, and neither flees nor pursues it; it is concerned with Reason, and open to Reason alone; it sets distress at naught, that is, so far as the will is concerned. As for how much sensations and passions are concerned, we saw in the preceding subsection that a man of Fortitude may be hard pressed by them.

Yet no-one seems to court pain for its own sake: virtuous men conduct themselves negatively towards it, vicious men, far from pursuing it, flee from it; but on the other hand, we do seem to pursue pain when we hurl ourselves needlessly into situations from which pain is inseparable. Some people seem to be avid for fear itself and danger, notwithstanding that (as I pointed out in the preceding subsection) fear comes close to pain; for fear (especially among bold and rebellious youth) has something in it that tickles their fancy, and affects them in that extraordinary way in which they are observed to take so much pleasure. But such pleasure seems to come not so much from fear itself, as from the hope that accompanies it. Something similar is also found in pain and sorrow in the strict sense: there are some, always bathed in sighs and tears, who reject all consolation, and seem to take pleasure in sorrow itself.

From these observations a certain division of Rage can be immediately inferred: namely, into Rage that embraces pain itself (and can be called Rage proper, or for ease of remembrance may also be termed *insanity*), and into Rage that plunges needlessly into situations from which pain is inseparable, without any liking for pain itself (which can be called *lack of foresight* or *rashness*). Rage can also be divided in another way, comparable with the division of Fortitude into Fortitude proper and Patience. Rage that is in excess of Patience, and pursues sorrow itself, if possible, or at least situations that bring sorrow, is called *inhumanity*—the inhumanity of those who scourge and macerate themselves, and in other ways embrace sorrowful things. But Rage that is in excess of Fortitude proper, and welcomes either danger itself and fear, or at least dangerous, uncertain, and fearful things, is called *recklessness*. This is the behaviour of those who needlessly endanger themselves in storms at sea, climb tall buildings, or throw themselves into drunken fights and swordplay, either because of a craving for such dangers, or out of ostentation and vanity.

Softness can be divided in a similar way. What is in defect with respect to Patience is called *Impatience*: like those who because of some present affliction abandon the rule of Reason and do not fulfil the roles that are incumbent upon them. They deliberately give themselves

up to tears, laments, and sighs, and are said to be *Soft* and *Impatient*. But Softness that is in defect to Fortitude proper is called *Timidity*, *Pusillanimity*, *Cowardice*, and *Faintheartedness*. The *Fainthearted* and the *Timid*, who desert their post out of fear of being driven from it, listen not to what Reason counsels, but to what Fear counsels, and obey this instead.

But one should take careful note that all these vices, when they are considered not outwardly and superficially (which is most often the case), but inwardly and in depth, prove to be akin to Intemperance; and this is true even of Stupor, which might seem to be the diametrical opposite of Intemperance, but when examined turns out to be related to it. Whenever men wander from the true path of Reason, they are always allured by the deceits of pleasure and delight; and to be driven by pleasure is to be Intemperate. Therefore, those who torture, scourge, and even slay themselves, are always attracted to it by pleasure, and are, as the poet has rightly said:

—such as whom their Pleasure rules.*

PART III

On Particular Virtues touching upon God

§ 9. *Piety*

Piety is Virtue *in a setting of divine things*. Virtue in a setting of *our* things, whether favourable or unfavourable, is either Temperance or Fortitude (as we have seen). But if we have to distinguish the latter kind of Virtue with respect to a genus, it must be regarded as a species of Humility, which we may distinguish from the Humility that has its seat among the Cardinal Virtues by calling it *Particular Humility*, or if you like, *Overt Humility*. For nowhere does Humility, that is, lack of concern with oneself, shine forth more brilliantly, and as it were dazzle the eyes, than in Fortitude and Temperance. For anyone who equally despises favourable and unfavourable things, which is the Office of a man of Fortitude and Temperance, is obvi-

* Virgil, *Eclogae* II, 65.

ously not to be persuaded to let himself be ruled by care, anxiety, and study of his own advantage.

Accordingly, just as particular and plain Humility is concerned with our own things, so Piety in general is concerned with divine things; and just as Humility has two parts, *Inspection of Oneself*, and *Disregard of Oneself*, so also does Piety have two parts, namely, *Inspection of God*, and *Looking up to God*, or venerating Him.

Moreover, Inspection of God depends on Inspection of Ourselves; and one must begin as always from what has been delivered to us from Heaven (as the poet says):* *Know Thyself*.

And by beginning with ourselves, we concluded in Treatise I that, firstly, we did not come into the human condition of our own accord, choice, or inclination, and were brought here not by our own efforts, but without even being aware of it (let alone willing it or having the power to do it). From this it follows that someone other than ourselves made us men, someone who accordingly is truly *Our Father*, or *Father of Men*, in contrast to whom our supposed Parents are called our *Father* and *Mother* only on account of some sort of crude analogy and similitude. (See my *Metaphysics*.)†

Secondly, we see that our Human Condition falls into two parts, namely, the *action* we have on our body when we seem to move certain bodily parts from their place; and the *passion* with which we are acted upon by our body and receive something from it, when (I mean) we are acted upon through the medium of our body and receive through it those diverse perceptions that we refer to as sensations and passions. With respect to both parts, however, we observe our condition to be ineffable, and that we are incapable of understanding either how our body is moved at our will or how we are moved by bodies existing outside us, and above all how we are moved by the motions of the body that we call ours, and which imbues us with such diverse perceptions. This ineffability reposes perfectly and ultimately in the cause of the human condition, that is, in the one whom we eventually perceived to be *Our Father*.

* *Ab eo quod coelo delapsus est*. Phrase originally used by the followers of Epicurus, in order to suggest the divinity of his views. Cf. Grynæus, 194. Geulincx may have Virgil in mind here, who uses the expression in recounting Aeneas's vision of his father in *Aeneid* V, 722.

† Cf. *Metaphysica Vera*, part 3, "Scientia" 1, and Annotation, in *Opera* II, 186–187 and 285–286, respectively / *Metaphysics*, 94–95.

Therefore, He is Father of Men, He is ineffable, and in creating us men shows himself to be supreme in all the things whose modality (that is, the manner of that supremacy) we cannot understand, but can understand only that we can never understand that modality; in which lies the full measure of *ineffability*. For something is *ineffable* when we understand that it exists, but it is not given to the human mind to understand how it exists or came to exist. What is ineffable must be understood and grasped by thought (for otherwise it would be nothing, as *not intelligible* and *not thinkable* are the same as nothing); but the modality of its existence, or how it comes to be, is hidden from us, and is not intelligible to us. That it can come to be what it is, consciousness itself and intimate experience compel us to acknowledge. Consequently, we know ourselves to be men, and that we act in some way on a body, and we know clearly that we are acted upon by that body, and that we are self-conscious, but of how these things can be we are abysmally ignorant. For more on this, see Part III (Theology) of my *Metaphysics*.*

By inspecting our condition we also readily learn at the same time what that world is like into which were sent by Our Father, namely, the world of *Body in motion*, and that He who is Our Father is its mover. And we learn that He has made two worlds: one outside us (whose essence is expressed by the most vehement, extremely diverse, and perfectly-ordered motions of the various parts of its extension); and the other within us, far more beautiful and refined, which is expressed in extremely diverse and unsurpassably marvellous images and forms of light and infinite colours, of tastes, scents, sounds, and so on. And we saw finally, that Our Father is the same one who joined us at conception to our body, and will release us from it at death; while remaining profoundly ignorant of whither He will transport us, and of what He will finally do with us. Here again the modality is unintelligible, and here again Our Father is ineffable.

Thus, He is the Father of us all, the Creator of the World, the Master of Life and Death, and ineffable in all these works.

* Cf. *Metaphysica Vera*, part 3, “Scientia” 3, and Annotation, in *Opera* II, 188 and 287–288, respectively / *Metaphysics*, 97–98.

§ 10. *Adoration*

In general, I here take *Adoration* to mean any kind of divine cult (which Christians also call *Worship*), whose *Obligation* is born out of *Inspection* of God. When we have inspected *ourselves*, there presently arises an *Obligation* to set ourselves aside, but when we have inspected *God*, there arises a corresponding *Obligation* to embrace Him; and once we have embraced Him, He becomes the object of roughly these four *Obligations*: *Adoration proper*, *Devotion*, *Prayer*, and *Gratitude*.

Adoration arises naturally in us when we see someone outstanding, who does things that are illustrious and excellent, and so ingeniously wrought that we can scarcely, if at all, tell how they are done. This is why Barbarians adore our Astronomers when they predict Eclipses, and our Engineers when they show them Clocks and Automata constructed by Mechanical Art. Accordingly, in *Adoration* there comes first *praise*, because the work is illustrious; secondly, *admiration*, and a state of *Stupefaction*, because they cannot understand either the theory or the practice that made the work possible; thirdly, *acknowledgement of dignity*, admitting the makers of the work to be worthier of honour than themselves, inasmuch as they have more of the wisdom in which that dignity is revealed; and fourthly, profound self-abasement, whereby they, ignorant as they are, confess themselves to be far inferior to the makers of the work.

From this it is clear that the highest *Adoration* should be accorded to God. The things that He has done in making us, no less than in establishing the foundations of the two worlds, are the most excellent and the most illustrious of all; and so this is a God worthy of the highest *praise*. We are also completely ignorant of how they are done, and what is more, we understand that we can never grasp how they are done, the latter being something that is not found in those Barbarians that I just mentioned; and so it is that God is *admirable* and stupendous in every way. And most conspicuous is His wisdom in those foundations, in fact His incredible wisdom (for which He must therefore be acknowledged to possess supreme dignity). And for our part, our ignorance is no less obvious to us than our awareness that it is *abysmal* ignorance, an awareness that obliges us to abase ourselves before God. And with these four *Obligations* we complete the cycle of *Adoration* that we owe to God.

Next, *Devotion* is the service of God, desiring to serve Him alone; and having renounced ourselves, swearing allegiance to Him alone.

Hence, He is as it were the *terminus ad quem* (as the Scholastics say) of Humility; for it is through Humility that we depart from ourselves and arrive at Devotion to God. And note that Devotion is here to be understood in a different sense from the vulgar usage: for they, the vulgar, interpret it as the tender passion with which the virtuous are wont to be suffused when they have leisure for unworldly affairs—which I remarked on near the beginning of Treatise I.*

The third part of Worship is made up of *Prayers*, the obligation to which arises from recognition of the other Obligations imposed on us, of our corresponding powerlessness, and of the Divine Power and Goodness which assure us that He can and will grant us the power to come near to meeting our Obligations. Accordingly, we must never petition God for any reason other than out of an intention to pursue the Obligations that He Himself, through the medium of Reason and His Laws, has enjoined on us; for what it is unlawful to want it is unlawful to seek, and therefore it is also not lawful either to seek or want any good as such for ourselves, by keeping it for ourselves, that is, and not referring it to something else (as is more broadly shown in Treatise I).† Neither is it lawful to seek such things from God. That wonderful little prayer that Christians call *The Lord's Prayer* makes no petition besides what attaches to our Obligations; which is both self-evident, and provable in many other ways; but if anyone should have any doubts, I would demonstrate it, if I were required to do so.

Finally, there are two reasons why we show *Gratitude*, and why it is due from us. God must be thanked on account of Obligations fulfilled (a reason that Prayers also acknowledge, with the distinction that these refer to Obligations to be fulfilled, while Gratitude refers to Obligations already fulfilled). Thanks should also be given for the truly infinite number of pleasant and delectable gifts (which I earlier called *favourable things*) that God has bestowed upon us—and this does not respect Prayers, for God is not to be requested to bestow on us favourable things as such.

These, then, are the four parts of Worship; of which the first two arise from Inspection of God, insofar as He is our begetter; the third,

* See pages 11–13, above.

† On the question of prayer in relation to this point, see Annotation 8 to Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 10, on page 279, below.

insofar as He is our lawgiver; and the fourth and last, insofar as He rewards us when we fulfil His law. And just as the principal part of Humility is not Inspection of Oneself but Disregard of Oneself, so the principal part of Piety is not Inspection of God, but Worship, and it is required of us for this reason alone.

§ 11. *Impiety and Superstition*

The Vice that is the opposite of Piety can be called by the general name of *Impiety*; just as the Vice that is the opposite of Temperance, whether in excess or defect, can simply be called *Intemperance*. Of course, these are general terms, and include in their meaning excess as much as defect, though more usually defect, inasmuch as the vulgar recognise Vice in defect rather than in excess, as I remarked in Treatise I, in the paragraph on Justice, under [4].*

Moreover, *Impiety* also has two parts, one involving false ideas of God, the other false worship. And as to the first part, it seems to be divided into four further parts, namely, *False Zeal*, *Idology*, *Atheism*, and *Heresy*.

False Zeal attributes to God what does not belong to Him. As this is mostly the result of reckless zeal, I have generally called False Zeal a Vice: it is the Vice of those who ascribed a body and a human form to God, such as (among philosophers) Epicurus, and (among pagans) the whole of the vulgar. To this is contrasted:

Heresy, which diminishes God, and removes His competencies; as when concern for human affairs, providence, and government are denied of God, which Epicurus likewise did.

Idology is when we attribute to some creature what belongs to God.

Lastly, *Atheism*, in which God Himself is removed, and His attributes projected onto brute nature; as with those who claim that everything was made without knowledge, without sense, and by some natural necessity, of whose explanation we are ignorant; such as that the angles in a triangle must be equal to two right-angles by brute necessity, and not dependent on any understanding (as it seems to them). But how wrong they are, how uninformed and stupid, I demonstrate

* Cf. Treatise I, Chapter II, Section I, § 3, [4], 28–29, above.

fully in Part III of my *Metaphysics*, which I call *Theology*;^{*} and it can also easily be shown from my remarks about Inspection of God.[†]

These four Vices consist in an error of the Understanding, though one that is vincible and therefore carries with it the sin of willing it. If anyone makes a mistake out of invincible ignorance, the reproach of Vice does not attach to him. Similarly, if someone led not by error but by lust expresses false ideas about God, he is no doubt Impious, but his Impiety is not of the kind that is contrary to Theology, but of another kind, that of Theolatriy. And by the way, the Poets of antiquity transgress here, when they ascribe to the gods brawling, fights, woundings, and shameful lusts.

Another kind of Impiety involves an evil and perverse cult of Divinity, or even no cult at all; and it arises readily from the aforementioned Vices. For those who labour under *False Zeal* will be inclined to venerate God and adore Him through the medium of things under which He must not be adored or worshipped. Anyone who ascribes divinity to an idol, easily falls into *Idolatry*, and instead of God looks up to and venerates some creature. Of course, an *Atheist* will not worship God, inasmuch as he does not accept any God, or confuses God with a mindless natural order. And a *Heretic*, who removes from God what is proper to Him, will similarly make Him the object of some defective and stunted cult.

And each of the four parts of Theolatriy has its corresponding Vices. To *Adoration* are opposed *Contempt of God*, *Blasphemy*, *Ridicule* and *Mockery*, and similar impious and horrendous aberrations of the human mind, in which they do not praise Him, but vituperate Him, do not admire, but summarily reject His works as low and commonplace, and things which have become vile through familiarity; nor do they think Him worthy, or themselves ever less than Him.

To *Devotion* is opposed *Abjuration* of God, which, though in another sense it has a place in every Vice (for Self-Love excludes God, measures man by himself, and makes him devoted to himself), is at the same time a type of sin by which this Vice formally comes about, and which naturally tends to it.

To *Prayers* are opposed *Neglect* and *Perverse Use* of the same, in which we do not pray to God that we may be able to meet our

* Cf. *Opera* II, 186–198 and 285–300/*Metaphysics*, 91–122.

† See § 9, above.

Obligations, but want to have things all our own way, or pray to God for the sake of our happiness, and what seems to constitute it.

To *Gratitude* are similarly opposed *Neglect*, when we do not tender thanks at all, and *Misuse*, in which we tender thanks to God for evil things, such as avenging ourselves on an enemy, the opportunity for Vice, lewdness, criminality, escaping the sanctions of the law, and the like.

§ 12. *Religion*

Religion is that division of Piety which embraces out of divine Revelation what it cannot attain by human Reason. Therefore, it is the summit of Piety, and also the pinnacle of Ethics (for Virtue can mount no higher than its head, that is, Reason, however high it climbs, and however much it imbues itself with God). But it is encompassed by dangers and dreadful precipices; so that it is well said that *it is preferable for men to have no Religion at all than such as most people have*.

Religion depends on forming a judgement concerning God and His Ineffability. Since we have seen clearly from inspecting God that many things are done by Him concerning us which we cannot comprehend by means of thought and Reason, we have no trouble believing and understanding that He may be able to do many other ineffable things that leave us in ignorance not only of how they are done but even what they are. He can impart some knowledge, if not of all of them, at least of some of them, those of most concern to us; and with this knowledge we may grasp the nature or the mode of what He has revealed to us, not indeed through Reason, but by mere testimony and authority. But since this subject may be quite dangerous (as I have said), and infested with an infinite number of illusions, impostures, and frauds (for to how many is their Religion not a matter of profit? How many, led by vanity and glory, do not claim to have received from God what are their own fabrications? How much force does stubbornness have here, and partiality to what was once accepted!), we have to prescribe some Rules whereby Piety may safely progress towards Religion, and absorb not only what it perceives by natural Reason, but also what can be known only through Divine Revelation.

And the *first* Rule is, that what is accepted as Divine testimony and authority should hold nothing of God that is unworthy of His

power, wisdom, and other attributes. Hence are expunged the dreams and portents of the Brahmins, the Turks or Mahometans, and other Pagans and Idolaters, which contain manifest incongruities, the follies of old women, and often execrable infamies.

The *second* Rule is, that what we propose to accept on Divine authority should to some degree, and indeed to the maximum possible degree, be of concern to us. For God is not one who would want us to occupy ourselves with idle matters, or have leisure for things that are of no importance to us, such as those innumerable worlds, and spaces between worlds, over which Democritus, and after him, Epicurus, used to trouble themselves, since they are not even consistent with Reason, let alone incumbent on us under Holy Scripture; for they are nothing to us. It is enough for us to know that the power of God is immense, and that He performs more things than we can conceive. Whether He wields that power over other men elsewhere, and in other realms, and in worlds yet to be founded, ruled, and governed, this, as I said, matters nothing to us.

The *third* Rule is, that what is claimed as genuine Divine testimony, should be confirmed by signs and miracles that can originate only from God; for otherwise anyone will sell us his dreams, and press them on us in the guise of Divine Revelation and authority. Therefore, if God acknowledges as His the things that they claim, it will show beyond doubt, with the force of evidence and irrefutable arguments, that these things emanated from Him.

The *fourth* Rule is, that we should keenly feel God as it were speaking to us, and saying that these things are His, originate from Him, and that it is He who is saying them, even though our Reason cannot grasp them. And this is the most important Rule of all, and even suffices on its own; but it is liable to boundless tricks, frauds, disorders, and temptations, which should be carefully kept at bay by humble prayers offered and poured out, and especially by living purely and simply, for *the best service of God is a good spirit*—which seems to be the Oracle not of Seneca, but of God Himself.*

* The line *optimus Dei cultus bonus animus est* refers to Pseudo-Seneca's *Liber de moribus*, often printed together with the *Proverbia* that were also attributed to Seneca. Cf. e.g. Seneca, *Liber de moribus*, Rome: Stephanus Planck, c. 1490, s.p.: 'Optimus ergo animus pulcherrimus cultor dei est.' The work has later been attributed to Publilius Syrus. Cf. Publilius Syrus Mimus, *Sententiae*, ed. Otto Friedrich, Berlin: Grieben, 1880/reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1964, 88: '28. Bonus animus cultor est dei pulcherrimus.' The vulgate Bible knows no similar text, but the idea of a contrite heart being more important than ceremony is found in Psalm 51: 17.

Provided that we are well instructed in these Rules, the path to true Religion, which is the supreme goal of all Ethics and of human life, is laid out for us.

Religion has also (just like Piety in general) its Theology and Theolatriy. Theology considers the truths that God has revealed; Theolatriy expedites what He has decreed for the performance of His worship.

Religion too has the opposing Vices of Impiety and Superstition, which are all the more detestable when Religion is grander and more splendid than simple Piety towards God.

PART IV

On Particular Virtues touching upon other men

§ 13. *Justice and Equity*

When Virtue touches upon other men, the general name for it is *Equity*, according to which all men are to have equal place with us. Further to this, we may say that the three particular Virtues, that is, the three most general kinds of Particular Virtue, are: *Humility* (in the Particular sense), *Piety*, and *Equity*. *Equity* also has two parts, namely, to inspect another man (whom Christians traditionally call one's *Neighbour*), and to respect him, or hold him in equal place with oneself.

As far as inspection of our Neighbour is concerned, we soon see that he is by nature constituted as we ourselves are; that he was brought here without being aware of it, that he will be carried away, and that while here he will act in complete dependence on the will of someone else, called *God*; and that in consequence he has the same Obligations as we have. And it is not necessary to say very much concerning his inspection, since it may easily be gathered from what I said concerning the Inspection of Ourselves.

The second part of Equity is more important, and is that from which Equity gets its name; and it is, *to value our neighbour as ourselves*. From this the Obligation of bringing aid and sustenance to him immediately follows. And just as we ought not to do anything that does not serve our Obligations, so neither should we help our neighbour with anything unless it furthers his Obligations. All the help

that we rush to him must always be with a view to his fulfilling his own Obligations. It is very wrong, and altogether abject to flatter him, to serve his lusts and dissipations, to supply him with the means to obtain honour and riches; and in fact, even consolation, if it causes him to persist or stand in his condition: it is right to do such things only if they are addressed to his Obligations. Equity, therefore, dictates that, because our neighbour has a duty to live, and to remain here until he is summoned hence by God (just the same as we have), we should help him to fulfil his Obligations: if he is drowning, let us pull him out of the water, if he is sick, let us tend him, if he lacks the means to live, let us support him, and counsel, encourage, and assist him with the mode of life that he should adopt.

If in the event that it should happen that either we cannot satisfy our Obligations or he his, we ought rather to fulfil ours than his; so that if we both fall into the water, and I have enough to do to save myself, he must be left to shift for himself; and not because charity begins at home, as the vulgar say, or because I should have no greater love than for myself, and should favour myself over all others (which is foolish, and obviously directed by self-love, that is, by sin), but because my own Obligations bind me more strongly to following them than to promoting the Obligations that other men have, as is self-evident, and easily deduced from the example of human laws. For when something is enjoined on many, we are obliged to follow, each for himself, what the injunction says, rather than help a companion to follow it.

With Equity, I make a distinction between Equity in the strict sense, and Justice.

Justice (and I mean by this, *particular*, rather than Cardinal Justice, as in Treatise I) grants to one's neighbour what is due to him strictly by right, that is, regardless of any grace and favour towards him. It means delivering to each the reward of his work, to the buyer the goods, to the vendor the price, to be determined by contracts and promises, not out of bare Equity, but out of Justice, in which no favour towards one's neighbour is involved. To a judicious man, diligently performing the work that was contracted, to add something beyond the maximum that he bargained for is Equity, not Justice, because in Equity a certain grace and favour shine upon one's neighbour, although it is nothing if one compares it to God's law, as in the strict sense God's law exacted the work.

Under Justice are subsumed commutative and distributive justice, and under Equity are subsumed liberality, clemency, courtesy, and other Virtues almost without limit, of which here is not the place to speak, as the treating of them is the concern of Politics.

The Vices opposed to Equity are, in defect, inequity, and in excess, disorderly love, which are easily gathered from what has already been said.

TREATISE III

ON THE END AND THE GOOD

INTRODUCTION

An End is, properly speaking, what we love and will; we do not absolutely love or will means, even though we may say that we love them and will them for the sake of an end. For example, if someone studies in order to become learned, he is a lover not of study and of burning the midnight oil, but of learning. If he wants to be learned in order to confer Public benefits, he is a lover not of learning but of the Public Weal; and if he wants to confer Public benefits in order to pursue Public honours and dignities, or resources and wealth, or friends and favour, then he is a lover of these things that he purposes to pursue, rather than of those things that assist in their pursuit. Thus, it is an end that always gives form and identity to our actions; it is, strictly speaking, what is the object of our love and appetites. But we do not love means: in fact we are often averse to them, and take up and make use of them only for the sake of the end that they serve; just as a sick man may love health, and detest medicine for its own sake, although he may desire it for the sake of his health.

Accordingly, this Treatise will be by way of a commentary on those that precede it and those that follow it, consideration of ends and means being so essential to Ethics. Moreover, to the End is linked the Good; in fact, they coincide, as we shall see.

§ 1. *The Natural End and the Operative End*

A *Natural End* is that *to which something is by its nature subject and tends*; for example, learning with respect to study, for study by nature derives its value from the learning that is to be acquired. An *Operative End* is that *for the sake of which someone works*; for example, when someone studies diligently in pursuit of learning, it can happen that the

Operative End is learning itself. From this example you see also that the same thing can be both the *natural* end and the *operative* end. But they can also be quite different. For example, when someone pours oil onto a fire, believing it to be water, the Operative End is to put out the fire (as that is what the one who acts intends by his action, to put out the fire), but the Natural End is to inflame the fire (as what he does tends by its nature to inflame the fire). Treatise I (in the *Adminicle of Humility*) also makes it clear enough that happiness is a Natural End of Virtue (for Virtue alone has the natural power to confer happiness), but is not an Operative End (for a virtuous man does not practise Virtue for the sake of happiness but for the sake of his Obligation).

This distinction having been put in place according to the true and solid principle that I have stated, many difficulties raised out of the Holy Scriptures by people whose understanding of them is imperfect are easily despatched and dissolved with its aid.

Of these two Ends, the Natural End appears to take precedence, being determined by Nature or God, whereas the Operative End is determined by us. For this reason, things never frustrate the Natural End (that is, the ultimate End, which alone is the End properly speaking), while they often frustrate the Operative End; as when, pursuing learning for the sake of glory, we are often frustrated of learning and glory alike. Further, the ultimate Natural End of all things is God; for all things have their being and come to pass through His grace (as we shall see later). And nothing frustrates *this* End; for it is impossible for anything to come to pass that does not accord with His grace, glory, and satisfaction.

§ 2. *The End-of-which and the End-for-which*

An *End-of-which* is that to the pursuit of which Means are applied; an *End-for-which* is that for whose gratification Means are applied. For example, when someone studies diligently, the End-of-which is learning, while the End-for-which is the student himself; as it is for his gratification, and so that he may acquire learning for himself, that he applies himself to study. Indeed this distinction can be found in the Natural End as well as the Operative End; for example, when an old man is avaricious, and scrapes up wealth from everywhere, the Operative

End-for-which is the old man himself, who studies to amass wealth for himself by his meanness; but the Natural End-for-which is his heirs, for it is they whom the old man's avarice will benefit. Similarly, the Natural End-of-which and the Operative End-of-which can be different, as we saw in § 1 from the example of someone who pours oil onto a fire believing it to be water. Again, to a sinner the Operative End-for-which is the sinner himself; for he perpetrates a deed in order that things may go well with him, and sins for his own gratification; but he is by no means the Natural End-for-which, since the deed does not tend to his gratification, but by its nature tends to his destruction. So who is the Natural End-for-which here? I reply, God, to whose gratification, whether the sinner wishes it or not, the deed that he has perpetrated with such great infamy tends by nature.

Of these two Ends, the End-for-which is paramount, as the End-of-which is pursued only on account of the End-for-which, so that the End-of-which has rather the character of a means, as compared to the End-for-which. For when the will has tended through a means towards the End-of-which, it does not rest there (and therefore this is not properly the End and the termination of the motion of the will), but, once the End-of-which has been secured, tends towards the End-for-which, and there rests, whereupon it is at last, in the proper sense, an End. We see from this how wrong they are who worship God for their own sake; for this is to invert the whole order of things, and to make a means out of one (God) who is essentially an End, and to destine to something else (to themselves) Him to whom all things must be destined.

God is therefore both the Natural End and the End-for-which of all created things. That God is an End is a property emanating necessarily from His essence, which must be attributed to Him in the most perfect way. At the same time, a Natural End is more perfect than an Operative End (as we saw in § 1), and an End-for-which is more perfect than an End-of-which: indeed, the latter is not properly an End, but a means (as we saw just now). The former is the reason why everything by necessity of consequence brings joy, approbation, and satisfaction to God. For everything was made by Him, and receives from Him the best laws, which are enacted by the decree of the best and most excellent of minds (that is, by God Himself); and everything is subject by its nature to those inexorable laws. God therefore sees in each thing that which is His, that is,

what is best and wisest; from the contemplation of which He necessarily derives indescribable satisfaction.

Further, the Operative End-for-which is usually those selfsame people, the operators themselves; for when we act in the ordinary way, we refer everything to ourselves, and do everything for our own gratification. However much we may appear to regard some other man as our End-for-which, when we examine the matter in depth we soon come to understand that, whatever we did, we did not for that man but for our own gratification. Suppose, for example, that someone has fallen into the water, and that at our own extreme risk we save him from drowning. Here, if you consider only the surface of things and the outward appearance, you will say that he who was drowning, whom we saved, was for us an End-for-which; but if you weigh the matter very carefully, or to be more precise, if we who saved him analyse deeply our thoughts and feelings, we shall soon see that we confronted the danger for our own gratification, not that of another. In fact, we were as avid for fame, or perhaps for profit or pity (for this is no less to act for one's own sake than out of fame or profit, since to wish to satisfy one's pity is no less self-love than to wish to satisfy any other passion); or perhaps out of some hidden motive, opinion, or evaluation, to which we hardly know how to give a name: it is extremely rare for Reason and Divine Love to spur us on, and for them alone to be the cause of our action. While we are usually content to bask in the glow of approbation reflected from an Office of Virtue, we do not overmuch care for Virtue itself.

Hence, it is not hard to see that what parents seem to do for the sake of their children, and others with strong human ties seem to do for the sake of those connections, they do for the most part for their own sake. But to act partly for their own sake is nothing but to wish to satisfy their passions. From this it is also plain that almost all our actions are not virtuous, and sin against the canons of Humility.

In contrast, a virtuous man has as the *End-for-which* of all his actions not himself (for this belongs to self-love and sin), nor God (for this would be simply to perform the act, as whether we like it or not, God is necessarily the *End-for-which* of all we do), but the law of God, and this after a certain manner, which will be explained in the next subsection.

§ 3. *The Beneficent End and the Obedient End*

This is a distinction in the End-for-which: sometimes we desire something for someone as being good for him, but at other times we obey his orders; motivated, that is, by his orders, without any intention of doing him good. In the former case it is a Beneficent End, in the latter case an Obedient End.

A *Beneficent End* is strictly an End-for-which, and we do it strictly for its own sake, and love it for its own sake; but an *Obedient End* is not altogether strictly an *End-for-which*: we are not said to take pleasure in or love such an end, but rather him for whose grace and favour we follow his orders. For example, to a servant his master is indeed an Obedient End, but not strictly an End-for-which; for the servant does not follow his master's orders in order to gratify his master, but for his own sake, in order that things may go well with him, and not go badly. Again, citizens obey the magistrate even though they may know that it will not profit the magistrate if they do as they are told, and that it will not harm him if they do otherwise, but because they know that they will be rewarded if they comply with the laws, or punished if they contravene them. In this case, it is obvious that the Magistrate is an Obedient End-for-which, and by no means a Beneficent End-for-which: on the contrary, those who obey him come into consideration as this End.¹

Of these two Ends presently under consideration, so far as Operative Ends are concerned, the Beneficent End is superior; for it is an End in the stricter sense, and men work more effectively towards it. Hence, to the servant in the example cited, he himself is the End of the actions that he performs, rather than the master, so that to anyone who considers the matter it emerges clearly that in this case the servant serves for his own sake rather than for his master's sake, and for himself rather than his master.

But on consideration of the substance of these Ends, that is, those which are said to be either Beneficent Ends or Obedient Ends, the Obedient End appears to be far nobler and worthier than the Beneficent End. For the Beneficent End presupposes some kind of imperfection; it necessarily requires something to which a benefit can accrue; and when these are conferred on others, he on whom you can confer the benefit should be inferior to you; inferior, I mean, on this occasion, that is, in the circumstances in which he is to

receive a benefit from you; the dignity of a patron being higher than that of a client, and the dignity of one who confers a benefit being higher than that of one who receives it. For example, even though a ruler may be superior to a physician within the State, yet when he is ill, or at least susceptible to illness, so that he requires the services of a physician, and needs the benefit conferred by him, he is to that extent inferior to the physician, as is self-evident from the principle stated above.

Therefore, if someone wishes to benefit another, he never does so without there being some stigma attached to the other person; for at least he thereby immediately exalts himself above the other in the matter to which the benefit relates. Hence, even the great and powerful are vexed if we perform, even out of perfect charity, a service to them; for they see, as it were, their indigence pointed out by implication, and a certain superiority accorded to those who offer to confer the benefit; in which lies the most unseemly impotence and shame. For as men, we are all so constituted that as a matter of course others must be, and can be, of use and assistance to us; and in consequence there are a thousand occasions in which even the lowliest of men can be of benefit to someone else, and to that extent be also superior, greater, and worthier than he, as that incontrovertible saying has it: *The dignity of a benefactor is higher than the dignity of the one who receives the benefit.**

Let us pause here to note how preposterous is the Piety of those who would gratify and benefit even God Himself, and how in Holy Scripture Christ Himself reprehended such Piety, saying: *If you love me, you will keep my commandment.*† I do not want you, He says, to impart some grace or benefit to me; the greatest love that you can have towards me is, and consists wholly in that you do as I command you; you can reach no higher to me.

Would you ask, then, to which of these two Ends God should be ascribed? I reply: When these Ends (I mean Obedient and Beneficent) are construed as Natural Ends, God is the Beneficent End of all things; for all things naturally and with supreme necessity tend to

* *Potior est persona benefactoris quam ejus qui beneficium accipit*: Cf. Grynaeus, 639, where the phrase *Argentum accepi, imperium vendidi* is further illustrated by the 'well-known saying' *Qui accipit beneficium, perdit libertatem*; 'There's no such thing as a free lunch' or, literally, 'To receive a benefit is to lose one's freedom.' See also St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II, 2^a, Qu. 106, Art. 4, and Seneca, *De beneficiis*, passim.

† St. John 15: 14.

His gratification, favour, and satisfaction, when they come into being, when they exist, and when they cease to exist. He is similarly the Obedient End of the same kind; for all things follow the decree and judgement of His will; and it is as impossible (if one may speak thus) that the will of God should fail in its effect as that a hill should not be accompanied by a vale. But if these Ends are construed as Operative Ends, God cannot be a Beneficent End by reason of considerations which are expressed in terms of lawfulness; that is, it is not lawful to put God in the position of a Beneficent End; as is plain enough from what has just been said. For similar reasons, neither can He be properly an Obedient End; for to wish to obey Him as He is in Himself is simply to perform an act, and whether you like it or not you will obey, or do absolutely what He wishes. All the same, God is in a certain way *per accidens* an Obedient End, namely, by virtue of the Law and Reason that He has instilled into us. For when we are virtuous we obey Him in the strict sense; but when we are vicious we still obey God Himself, though not His Law. (See Treatise I, § 2). Since, moreover, the Law of God *is* from God, when we obey His Law we seem in some way also to obey *Him*, with an obedience above that of the wicked, who while ignoring His Law, nevertheless and unwillingly do the sole thing that He wants.

§ 4. *The Ultimate End and the Subordinate End*

An *Ultimate End* is one that is not subordinate to another End; a *Subordinate End*, one that is subordinate to some further End. For example, when someone studies in order to obtain honour, and with a view to being esteemed by others for his learning and knowledge, learning is a Subordinate End of his study (as it is directed to another End, namely, honour, because he who studies in this way studies not in order that he may simply be learned, but in order that he may be honoured for being learned), the Ultimate End being honour; for (as, I venture to say, is usually the case) such a scholar does not destine this honour to some further End.

Among these Ends, the Ultimate End is undoubtably the more important; in fact, a Subordinate End is not really an End at all, but a means; as in the example cited, where learning is undertaken only as a means of obtaining honour. It also follows from this that we neither will nor love a Subordinate End absolutely; for will and

love are appropriate only to an End, and adhere to it, while means do not possess the will, but rather act as a way by which the will may be carried through to an End. Hence, in the example cited, the student does not love learning and knowledge, but honour.

Ultimate and Subordinate Ends also appear both in Natural and Operative Ends, and in Ends-of-which and Ends-for-which. For example, to their parents children are the End-for-which of many actions, though a Subordinate one; for the parents themselves are the Ultimate End-for-which, and the benefits they bring their children refer back to themselves: they benefit the children in their own interests. And similarly, a virtuous man can be an End-for-which for himself, though a Subordinate one: he may look after the things that relate to his convenience and pleasure (see Treatise I, Section II, § 1, on Humility), but he looks after them only because of some further End, and in the long run because of the Ultimate Obedient End, that is, God and Reason.

It clearly follows from what has been said that God is absolutely the Ultimate End, and that in the most excellent way: for He is a Natural End (and this is more excellent than an Operative End), He is an End-for-which (and this is nobler and more excellent than an End-of-which), and He is both the Beneficent End and the Obedient End of all things.¹ And in all these Ends, by the very fact that everything exists entirely for his sake, He is also the Ultimate End. But God is not always the Ultimate Operative End; for even if our action is in itself for the sake of God, we still do not always act for His sake or for the sake of His Law. Alas, far from it! We rarely do as much as that, as is clear enough from what has been said.

§ 5. *Good and Evil*

Good is what we love; Evil is what we are averse to: hence, Good and Evil are external denominations, and presuppose nothing in the thing that they denominate; the visible and the audible being similar denominations. This is clear from the fact that often what is good to one may not be good to another; which is most obviously the case in pleasant goods, for food and drink that are to the taste of one palate may not be to the taste of another. In fact, this is also found in virtuous goods, as what is virtuous to one may be vicious to another; so that it is right to put to death an accused who has been convicted of a felony by a court, but not so by a private cit-

izen, what would be vicious in the latter case being virtuous in the former.

But there is a difficulty: how can we say that Good is what we love, and Evil what we are averse to, since men notoriously love things that are noxious and evil, while hating things that are good and profitable? It must be answered *first*, that while loves are diverse, they fall into two main divisions, namely, the love of God, and the love of what is Mine, that is, of Virtue and Self-love respectively: what we love as Virtue is virtuous, what we love as Self-love is pleasant. Accordingly, it often happens that what we love with one of these loves is, if it is measured against the other type of love, hardly meritorious, but worthy rather of the hatred that is the opposite of such a love. For instance, the temperate say that the intemperate love noxious and evil things; for the temperate are speaking with respect to the Obedient Love that makes them temperate and virtuous; and see that what the intemperate seek hardly merits such love, and therefore is not good; but that it deserves the hatred and execration that are the opposite of such love, and that therefore it is evil, foul, and to be rejected. But the intemperate say on the contrary that virtuous men love evil and noxious things, because they are speaking with respect to their own love, that is, Concupiscent Love, of which the things that virtuous men do are unworthy. Virtuous men neglect honour in favour of the contemplation of Reason, sometimes ruining their fortunes and falling into great calamities and bodily infirmities. But what is a moral Good can be an unpleasant Evil, and what is a pleasant Good, an immoral Evil; and in this sense we can say that men often love what is evil. It is a Good, because they love it; but an Evil, because it is not loved with another kind of love, but rather rejected.

Secondly, men are sometimes even said to love what is an Evil, and to hate what is a Good, within the same kind of love, because they sometimes love something whose circumstances, if they had them in view, they would certainly not love, but rather detest. For example, children love and want to take pills that have been gilded, whose bitterness, if they were aware of it, they would hardly want, but would detest as soon as they began to taste it in their mouth. The same thing occurs in matters of virtue as a result of invincible ignorance, of which I shall speak later. But in all this, one must remind oneself that what is loved and what is Evil are not exactly the same, as in the example cited, where children love glitter, and

it is good, that is, a pleasant Good, but hate the bitterness of which they are unaware, and which is an unpleasant Evil. Thus, it is clear that Good cannot be hated, and Evil cannot be loved, when we speak of the same kind of love and hate, and concerning the same object, which may be either loved or hated, and which may be either good or bad.

Under the usual distinction, Good falls into Useful, Pleasant, and Virtuous Good; whether rightly or wrongly, we shall see in what follows.

§ 6. *Useful Good*

The *Useful* is a *means to a Good*, that is, anything that serves and conduces to the pursuit of a Good, in the sense of that which we love. Thus, if learning is a Good, that is, we love it, study will be Useful, as it naturally serves and conduces to our emerging learned. Similarly, if during a storm survival is good to a merchant (as it assuredly is), it will be useful for him to jettison his merchandise, as this naturally serves and conduces to survival, that is, to his being saved, along with his ship.

From this we see that a Useful Good is not absolutely a Good; it is not loved in itself, and on its own account, but at most *per accidens*, and it is said to be loved and desired for the sake of something else. Hence also, an End-of-which is not absolutely a Good, but at most a Useful Good; for I showed a little earlier that it is merely a means to an End-for-which. And further, it follows from this that those who make God an End-of-which, and themselves an End-for-which (as do those who say that they seek to follow God Himself for their own sake, as one by whom they are to be eternally blessed) do not place God among Good things, but place Him only among Useful things; and, as I showed, Useful things are not absolutely good, but are merely conducive to Goods.

Will you enquire, then, whether it is the same thing to be Useful and to be a Means? And again, whether an End and a Good are the same? I shall reply here to the first question, leaving the second question until later. And I reply in the negative. For there are also means to what we do not love; for example, a bad diet is a means to ill-health, though a bad diet is not Useful in the absolute sense, but rather useless and harmful. Therefore, to be a Useful Good

something more is required than to be a means; namely, that it should be a means to a Good, that is, a means of obtaining what we love.

But because everything tends ultimately to God, and accedes to His grace and favour, in this sense anything at all is Useful, and it is a true saying that *God and nature have done nothing in vain, nothing useless*, which the Scholastics in particular never tire of repeating.*

From what has been said we learn also what kind of means must be read into the definition of a Useful Good. For while 'Means' may be construed in as many senses as 'End', and accordingly is sometimes a Natural Means, at other times an Operative Means (according as the matter may be determined by the operator to a certain End, or tend and conduce by its very nature to it), in the definition it must be interpreted as a Natural Means; for to be a Useful Good it is not sufficient to be an Operative Means. For Operators may determine to an End often quite useless means, like someone who pours oil on a blaze, believing the oil to be water; in this case it is an Operative Means to put out the flames, but because it is not a Natural Means it is useless, and so is not called a Useful Means.

§ 7. *Pleasant Good*

A *Pleasant Good* is that which we love with *passionate love*, such as health, robustness, and so on, which in Treatise II I called *favourable things*. From this we see that Pleasure also involves Virtue, in fact also Usefulness; for many things are pleasant to us because they are virtuous, many because they are useful, and passionate love can be found in all love (which consists in intention), and for the most part is indeed so found.

Therefore, a Pleasant Good does not require us to embrace it with genuine love. There are some with no intention of making themselves happy (such as all virtuous men) who also overflow with the sweetest delights and pleasures. However, genuine love can be

* *Deus et natura nil frustra, nil inutile fecerunt*: axiom of Scholastic physics. Cf. Stephanus Chauvin, *Lexicon Philosophicum*, Leeuwarden: Franciscus Halma, 1713², ed. Lutz Geldsetzer, Düsseldorf: Janssen & Co., 1967, 432–433, under NATURA: 'Quia autem supremi legislatoris sapientiam maximè decet, ut modo simplicissimo omnia moderetur & regat, meritò apud Philosophos haec sunt vulgata axiomata: Natura nihil molitur frustrà: Natura odit superflua &c.'

directed towards a Pleasant Good, albeit wholly concupiscent love, with which one wants some Good for oneself; and this is how it is loved by all evil men.

Because, therefore, virtuous men are not led towards a Pleasant Good by any genuine love (having no intention of pursuing it for their own sake), they are rightly said not to hold delights and pleasures, and favourable things in general, to be Goods. In contrast, evil men continually have an intention of obtaining favourable things for themselves, and so are rightly said to hold pleasures alone to be Goods.

It is now clear from what has been said that a Pleasant Good is not in the proper sense a Good. It is not loved with pure love, but only with Passionate Love, and is brought into being by Passionate Love. Just as Passionate Love is not in the proper sense love (as we saw near the beginning of Treatise I), so also a Pleasant Good, because it is loved with Passionate Love, is not in the proper sense a Good. And though a Pleasant Good may often be loved by the vicious with genuine love, it is still not loved in the proper sense, nor is it in the proper sense an object of genuine love. For even though the immoral may be said to seek pleasures, since pleasures, as favourable things, are still not an End-for-which, but only an End-of-which, it is those same vicious people who are truly the End-for-which, whence it follows that a Pleasant Good is loved by them only as a Useful Good (which is not, in the proper sense, to be either a Good or to be loved), and that in the true and proper sense they are loved by themselves. And why men should balk at such a manner of speaking, and not say that they love themselves when they are motivated by concupiscent love, and when they themselves are the End-for-which, and say instead that they love favourable things, which are no more than an End-of-which, I discussed early on in the Annotations to Treatise I.*

§ 8. *Virtuous Good*

A *Virtuous Good* is *what we love because Reason dictates it*; that is to say, we love it with Obedient Love. And it is therefore nothing else than

* See Annotation 21 to Treatise I, Chapter I, § I, 175–176, below.

being prepared to perform what Reason dictates. From this we also see that a Virtuous Good is constituted by love of such a kind that it is not so much itself that is loved (inasmuch as it is only an End-of-which), as Reason (for this is the Obedient End-for-which in the love that constitutes Virtue). Thus, a virtuous man loves not the actions that he performs at the dictate of Reason (which alone are in the proper sense a Virtuous Good), but Reason itself as ruling those actions. Moreover, Reason is the law and image of God in our minds, which accordingly a virtuous man cannot love unless he in some manner loves God Himself. Just as someone who in obeying the law of a prince, which the prince has digested and promulgated, loves the dictate which has been conceived in the mind of the prince more than the law as engraved on tablets; so a virtuous man loves Reason because it is the Law of God, conceived by God and emanating from Him, rather than as it is in itself or as it resides in the mind of this same Virtuous Man; and now because that decree is in God, it is God Himself in part, and in this way the Virtuous Man also obeys God, and not only Reason. From this we see that there are only two things to be loved by men; they love either themselves or God. The Love of God is directed at Virtuous Good, the love of oneself at Pleasant Good, for when we love Virtue, we love God after some manner, as we saw just now; but in loving Pleasant Good we really love ourselves, as we saw in the preceding subsection. And Useful Good is not loved, as we showed in § 6.

Therefore there are only two Goods, ourselves and God: God truly a Good, and through virtuous love, but ourselves falsely, and though perverted love; or in other words, not through love in the proper sense. All this is clear enough from what has been said.

But what should we say concerning Benevolent Love? For it seems possible here to bestow a measure of Good on another, which can be called an *Amicable* Good. I reply, that this objection at least shows that the Scholastics, who are of the opinion that there are three classes of Good, that is, the Useful, the Pleasant, and the Virtuous, have omitted a fourth, namely, Amicable Good. An Amicable Good is therefore what we love with Benevolent Love. But if the question be thoroughly examined, we find, in the proper sense, nothing of the sort; for if you have an intention of benefiting another (in which case this other can be called an Amicable Good), you conceive this intention either from what Reason dictates, or without such a dictate. If the former, your love is not in the proper sense tendered to

the one whom you call a friend, but to Reason and God (for one must always tender it to the Ultimate End, to which alone Reason gives the name of Good). But if the latter, then you act out of desire, and because it pleases you so to act; and so it is not the one you call a friend whom your love endows with the name of Good, but yourself through that love of yours; and your love, which seemed to be Benevolent, is, on second thoughts, wholly Concupiscent.

It is also plain from what has been said, how gravely the evil sin when they put themselves in place of what is proper to God. For He alone is good; yet when they love themselves instead of Him, they want not Him but themselves to be Goods; for to love is also to have as a Good, and Love in itself constitutes a Good, inasmuch as what it loves becomes for it a Good.

TREATISE IV

ON THE PASSIONS

INTRODUCTION

There are two parts to the human condition: to act on a body, and to be acted upon by a body (which I demonstrated in my *Metaphysics*, and discussed further in Treatise I when dealing with the Inspection of Ourselves). The second part embraces *affections* and *feelings*; and feelings indeed with more justification, which is why these days they are what everyone means by *passions*.

There is in truth little difference between sensations and passions. They coincide *firstly*, because they are both predicated on some perception of ours; and this is nothing other than a certain condition, by which we feel internally and in our mind or spirit, and of which we are rendered conscious and certain by consciously observing it within ourselves. It is just like seeing or loving: when I see, I am in one mode; when I love, I am in another; and unmistakably recognise these modes in my consciousness. They coincide *secondly*, because both (I mean sensations and feelings) arise in such a way from our body that we have no trouble in understanding that if we lacked a body we would lack all the modes as well. But they differ because we usually ascribe *sense-perception* to external things, as providing their source, and usually also with a judgement that the things themselves are similarly affected, and have modes similar to those they convey to us. So it is that when we see a light we ascribe the perception or likeness to the Sun, fire, etc., judging these objects to be endowed with such an image. But a perception and likeness that are found in feeling or passion we do not ascribe to things placed outside us, nor do we judge those things to have something similar in them. For example, with an enemy at hand to deal with, though we may be struck by hatred or fear of him, we do not judge that he has in himself such a likeness as is aroused in us by his appearance.

§ 1. *Passions are outside the scope of morals*

The Stoics were of the opinion that all Passions are evil in the moral sense, while the Aristotelians said that moderate Passions are good, but placed immoderate ones among the vices. They were both well wide of the mark; for if there were anything evil in them, it would have to be imputed not to us, but to God, the author of our condition; and this must be rejected; for a good part of the human condition consists in these passions, and it is almost entirely through them that we exist as men. If they were to be withdrawn from us along with the senses, we would no longer be able to regard ourselves as men. Passions are, then, so far as nature is concerned, quite good, though some of them are unpleasant to us or affect us adversely (such as pain, fear, etc.); but so far as morality is concerned they are neither good nor bad for us, but have the same character as seeing and hearing, etc, on account of which no-one is called either virtuous or vicious.

But you will say: some Passions, those by which men are incited to criminal acts, murders, and horrid perversions, are foul, lustful, obscene, and wicked. I reply: that men are incited by those Passions, this indeed is evil; but those same Passions are not in themselves evil; for they merely contain in themselves a certain perception, impressed on us by our body, and necessarily channelled into us; though not so much by the body (which is an irrational thing, and consequently can, in the sense of having a real effect, cause nothing), as by the author of our body and human condition. That we follow our Passions, this indeed is reprehensible, because our author does not want us, led on by them, either to act or refrain from acting, but subjects us entirely to Reason, and wants us to act and to refrain from acting according to its dictates. In the same way, when He granted us senses, He did not thereby want us to use them in the investigation of truth, but rather to use innate notions and ideas. This is why, incidentally, it is observed that those who follow the senses in Philosophy are to be counted with those who follow their Passions in Ethics.*

* The idea that there is a perfect correspondence in the errors of epistemology and ethics is again expressed in § 5, 118–119, below. See also the passages of the *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam* and *Annotata Latoria* referred to in the next two footnotes.

Note also, that we not only follow our Passions most of the time, but that we also have a great propensity to follow them; which is indeed a sort of weakness of ours. We do not attend sufficiently to Reason (which alone ought to move us), and we are also uncertain whether we wish to follow its lead or give orders to it, always inclining more to the things to which passion draws us. This propensity, weakness, and uncertainty are a great source of corruption; and because we find it hard to distinguish it from the Passions themselves, some ascribe that corruption, which they should have imputed to themselves, to their Passions, and to God as the author of them (for this is the inevitable consequence). There is, therefore, for example, in carnal lust (which is a very vehement passion, especially in youth) a certain sensation or perception, which in itself is not harmful; but which eventually, as we continue to take delight in this Passion, makes itself felt as a propensity to the pursuit of other things, things towards which it seems to impel us; and in this there is corruption and sin.

Hence it comes about that even honest and upright men, excited by the consciousness of certain Passions, may be embarrassed and ashamed about it. This is not to be considered as arising from the sensation of experiencing the Passions within themselves, but because of the propensity to desert Reason and follow Passion that they experience so intensely within themselves at the same time. For in this propensity and (as I have termed it) weakness, lies the real disgrace, the real shame.

You will ask: why do we have this propensity? I reply: because we are born infants; and as a result will cleave first to sensations and Passions rather than Reason (as I have, it so happens, demonstrated elsewhere).^{*} But why are we born infants, rather than men, with the full use of Reason? At this point Philosophy stalls.

See my *Broader Annotations on Descartes*, especially those sections that deal with the origin of error.[†]

^{*} Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Introduction, Section 2, and Annotations, in *Opera* II, 203–204 and 301–303 in particular.

[†] Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Annotata Latiora in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes*, the commentary to Part 1, Articles 71 and 72, in particular; in *Opera* III, 411–420.

§ 2. *Action from Passion**The Life of the Vulgar*

The actions of the vulgar almost always arise from Passion. They are at first driven to learning, and the acquisition of some settled mode of life, by fear of parents, instructors, and schoolteachers. When they have conditioned themselves to this mode of life, they usually also come to love it, and through this love and familiarity (which are again Passions) persist in it. They are all the more firmly attached to it and driven by dread of the unfamiliar, of which all the vulgar are terrified to the utmost possible degree; so much so that we observe that most of them, however much they are urged to change their mode of life, will do so only when the time comes also to exchange life itself for death. And these make up the *first*, or *lowest grade* of the vulgar, who are, as I said, kept about their duties by love and familiarity, if they have become conditioned to them; and by fear and dread, if they have not. In a word, they are like children, and form the greatest part of the vulgar.

It must also be noted that what the vulgar call *conscience* is a mere Passion; in fact, a stimulus and compulsion to follow the dictates of Reason. When they have obeyed it, it abates a little (as all Passions are wont to do), whereupon they say that they have *appeased their conscience*; but when they defy it, they are tormented and oppressed, whereupon they say that they have a *disturbed conscience*, or that they are *pricked by their conscience*; all of which are similarly found in other Passions. But as they lack genuine diligence, and never pay enough attention to Reason, most of the things in which they are pricked by their conscience tend to be obscure to them; and so they tend to connect these obscure things with other obscure things that are not dictated by Reason.¹ For example, Reason dictates that violence should not be used against other men. From this dictate of Reason they obscurely infer that the bones of the dead should not be removed from their resting-place, which they judge to be a great crime if they contravene it; and such beliefs are recorded everywhere in the histories of the pagans.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that those among the vulgar who obey their conscience obey nothing but their Passions. All the same, they are called *religious* and *holy*.

Such people make up the *second grade* of the vulgar; but they are comfortably in league with the first grade, for they are pricked by their conscience only in respect of unfamiliar actions, so that here dread of the unfamiliar predominates. In a word, they are like women, in whom this feeling is more conspicuous.

The *third grade* of the vulgar consists of those who have overcome something of their fear of the unfamiliar through an opposing overconfidence and recklessness. They even go so far as to court danger, and are not so terrified by the unfamiliar; and if they advance enough in this, they wander from one situation to the next, and transfer their fear to anything that is steady and constant—on account of which they are considered drifters. And if as a result of their overconfidence and recklessness they go so far in their rejection of fear of the unfamiliar as to despise even death, they turn men of war, and pass for men of virtue with the vulgar, if they are ambitious; but if they despise honour as well, prove *thieves* and robbers. And this third grade is generally that of men.

Lastly, the *fourth grade* of the vulgar consists of those who temper and moderate one Passion with another. For example, if they should find themselves excessively afraid whether they will be able to keep themselves about their duties, they summon up courage, and spur themselves on with hope of fame; or if they should feel themselves prey to pleasures or lusts, they discourage themselves with fear of ill-repute. To the vulgar they seem *wise men* and *philosophers*.

But all these folk, however moderate and composed they may appear (as with the first grade), devout and religious (as with the second grade), magnanimous and acute (as with the third grade), or wise and perspicacious (as with the fourth grade), are disgraceful and rascally sinners, who do nothing out of Reason, but everything out of Passion.

§ 3. *Action contrary to Passion*

The Philosophic Life

The Philosophers, observing that the vulgar always act out of Passions, determined to take the opposite course, and endeavoured to act contrary to their Passions; but thereby they showed that they were not really wise, but merely deluded in a more ostentatious manner than

the vulgar; in fact merely travelling in the opposite direction around the same circle as the vulgar (from whom they were supposed to have detached themselves), as we shall presently see.

Some of them, such as the Cynics and Stoics, were determined to root out all their Passions. But this was manifest nonsense, as they could not root out all their Passions without overthrowing their whole body, and completely shedding their human condition; which is impossible, as I showed in Treatise I, Second Obligation. Whilst we remain in the human condition, we cannot shed our Passions, inasmuch as they constitute the greater part of the human condition. Lastly, the Passions are not evil, but in general morally neutral, and even naturally good, and things that we are forced to suffer by the same ordinance with which we were bidden to be men. See § 1.

Therefore, another School of Philosophers taught, a little more wisely, that we should not actually root out our Passions (which I have shown to be unreasonable and impossible, or impious), but only refrain from, and temporarily suspend, those actions to which we feel ourselves being urged by some Passion or other.

Plato was of this persuasion, when he told a mischievous boy, “You would get a beating if I were not so angry,” meaning that he did not want to authorise a beating to which he saw himself being provoked by anger and a desire to punish, however just and agreeable to Reason it might be.* But in truth, there is no real wisdom in these philosophers either. If an action is to be omitted because some passion moves us to it, the opportunity and occasion of acting rightly may sometimes slip away before the passion can subside. Hence, although it is not virtuous of a man to act out of Passion, neither is it virtuous to refrain from acting out of Passion; rather he should act only out of Reason, whether in the meantime Reason conspires with Passion or opposes it.

Other Philosophers, as if taking a mixed and intermediate philosophic stance, held that Passions should not be rooted out, but only that we should act contrary to them. These Philosophers, who exceed the Platonists in unreason, but fall short of the Cynics and Stoics, again come in two kinds. Some have called for one to act in general against the impulses of Passion (a tendency which they call

* According to Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* III, 39, it was one of his slaves whom Plato spared a beating for this reason.

mortification); so that, for example, if delicious food is set beside disgusting food, they will consume the disgusting food; if anyone rails against them they will comply rather than rebuke him; and so on concerning the rest of their Passions; and they train themselves and their disciples in this way of acting with extreme austerity. Others in turn have declared war on certain Passions; by which I mean that they have determined perpetually to rein them in, whilst giving free rein to others, as if relaxing the bridle; especially those Passions related to the pleasures of the table and venery, to fame, and to a certain stubbornness or persistence in what one has begun, which they have undertaken to rein in most rigidly with a solemn oath. And they call the first of these three kinds of Passion the *Flesh*, the second the *World*, and the third the *Devil*, setting themselves in opposition to them by the said oath, and with an undertaking to abstain from those Passions that relate to venery, to honours, to public affairs, and further, to do not what seemed right to them, but what seemed right to others.

And so we find that Philosophers too come in four grades, namely, Cynics and Stoics, then Platonists, and lastly the two grades of *mortifiers*, as they style themselves.¹ The Cynics correspond to the third grade of the vulgar, and the Platonists to the fourth grade, that is, to the sages; the remaining grades can be reduced to those grades of the vulgar with which they have most affinity. But in all these grades there is nothing but corruption and sin: they all again act out of Passion, though they themselves do not sufficiently perceive it. And here the answer that Plato once made to Diogenes holds true, when Diogenes said that he trampled on Plato's pride (though actually he trampled on Plato's doormat): *You trample on my pride with a greater pride.** Thus, they too act even against passions with a greater passion. All these shifts, as we have seen, are contrary to Reason, and therefore proceed from Passion. Whenever we decide to act, we are moved either by Reason, or by some Passion, even if only by a mere lust for action, in which we do such-and-such because the doing of it pleases us. And this is a lesson that must be repeatedly instilled into men.

* Cf. Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* VI, 26.

§ 4. *Action above Passion**The Christian Life*

Those who are truly virtuous (as Christians are, if they are what they are said to be not only in name, but in reality) act neither out of Passion (in which is manifest impotence and weakness), nor against it (in which is manifest unreason and fanaticism), but above Passion. For they may be said to pass it by, and not deem it worthy of any consideration; whether a passion is absent or present, they are not anxious about it; they do what Reason dictates, and care for this alone. Thus, if they become angry, they do not therefore resort to violence (which is the way of the vulgar), but neither do they abstain from violence (which is very much the way of the exalted Philosophers). They do not say with the vulgar: *You will be beaten, because I am angry*; nor do they say with the Philosophers: *You would be beaten, if I were not angry*; but say: *You will be beaten, because Reason dictates that you be beaten by me, whether I who then beat you happen to be angry or not*. Or they say: *You will not be beaten, because Reason forbids it, whether I then feel pity for you or not*. No-one can fail to grasp a proposition which breathes so much of the nobility of purpose that characterises the virtuous man in all respects.

Hence, it is now clear that virtuous men often act *with Passion*, but never *from Passion*. That is, Passion often accompanies their actions, but is never a cause of their actions; it is Reason alone to which they reserve the right to dictate or forbid their actions. It is also clear that it is an arduous and difficult business not to stumble or fall in the process. For since Passions are naturally linked with our actions, what must necessarily accompany them may also precede them, and that those who have begun to chastise in anger go on to chastise from anger, and also that those who with pleasure embark on a pious and good work go on to complete it out of pleasure. And in truth, when we examine the matter closely we are made all too aware that this is how we ourselves behave.

You will say: The Passions interfere with diligence, that is, listening to Reason: for it is an oft-quoted and a true verse that:

*Our senses attend less to many things than to one.**

When therefore the mind is listening to Reason, it is greatly distracted by sensations and passions, as is well-known to anyone who goes about the world, and converses with diverse kinds of men. He feels that it is exceedingly difficult, or almost impossible at such times to discuss a mathematical demonstration, and to pay attention to what Reason says in all things. Accordingly, the virtuous should keep away, uproot, and reject their passions, in order to leave room for the first part of Virtue, that is, to be diligent. I reply, that the virtuous do sufficiently uproot and reject their Passions, that is, as much as is required for diligence, when they neither take them into consideration, nor allow them to give occasion or cause to their actions.¹ But to wish to expel those selfsame Passions on their own account is to wish to remove oneself from the human condition (which is wrong), or to attempt an impossible thing, that is to will both to be a man, and to will to be without some part of humanity (which is unreasonable, as I demonstrated above). For what the Passions tend to do to us when we strive against them is to augment, and as it were reproduce themselves. With shame and lust this is so obvious that it cannot be hidden by any subterfuge. Those who, when they begin to blush, resist their shame, usually blush all the more; so that it is more effective to turn the mind to thinking of something else than to enter into a struggle with our Passions when they disturb us, and prevent us from listening to Reason or performing our offices. This indeed is not to take them into consideration, to regard them as matters of indifference, and whether they are absent or present to attach no importance to them in the course of doing our duty.

When we think about spiritual things (for example, of our mind, of God, of eternal truths), we observe figments of the imagination, or appearances and images, which those who have a good understanding know do not represent the spiritual things that are being observed by the mind. For this reason they neither favour such appearances, because they can only hinder thought of a spiritual nature, nor make an effort to expel them, because they would not achieve this, and in the attempt would be more likely to render those appearances all the more impressive. They merely tolerate them, do

* *Pluribus intentus minor est ad singula sensus*: Latin aphorism of unknown origin.

not take them into consideration, and as a result of their contemplation of them neither say nor deny anything, but derive all their conclusions from innate ideas and notions. The virtuous have the same attitude towards their Passions. They do not attempt to root them out (this would be vain, and in the attempt to root them out, what they would like to root out would all the more firmly embed itself). Nor do they even adapt themselves to their Passions, or impose order on them, or allow themselves to be seduced by them (for this would be corrupt, and end in vice and sin), but behave towards their Passions in exactly the same way as they behave towards themselves, that is, in a merely negative way. They do not take account of them, do not trouble themselves about them, and do not waste effort on them when there is something else that needs to be done. Whether Passions are absent or present is a matter of indifference to the virtuous.

§ 5. *The Enemies of Virtue*

The enemies of Virtue are not our Passions (as they are unjustifiably believed to be by the vulgar, with the Stoics making common cause here with the vulgar), but *our inclinations, proclivities, and propensities* to act or refrain from acting out of Passion. Ignorantly confusing these propensities with the Passions themselves, they recklessly turn the whole of Ethics, in fact I would even venture to say the whole of Piety, upside down.¹

Therefore, just as our proclivity to apply sensual appearances to the external objects that present the occasion of those appearances is to be dissociated from the *Senses*, so also that inclination of ours, by which we feel ourselves moved, and impelled as if by violence to do or not do something out of Passion or on account of the Passions themselves, is to be dissociated from *Passions*. And those who wander into this error do indeed turn the whole of Ethics upside down; just as those who wander into the other error that I have presently noted turn the whole of Physics upside down; which those who have cultivated the true Physics (delivered to us by Descartes), can perceive readily enough.

Moreover, different men have proclivities to different Passions: some of them are *irascible*, that is, inclined to vengefulness; some are *lustful*, that is, inclined to act out of lust, or venereal passion; others are *fearful*, that is, prone to flee or abandon their post, and to act

out of fear in other, similar ways; and so on. And they aver that they are stimulated by *anger* to take vengeance, impelled by *lust* to rape, by *fear* to flight. But they are seriously mistaken: for they are excited to this or that act not by their Passions, but by some propensity of theirs, a propensity that inclines them to act out of Passion. Hence, it is not the case that there are different proclivities in different men to obey Passions, but similar and almost the same proclivity in all of them, their body being disposed in this or that way to this or that passion. Thus, some are inclined to venery, others not to venery but to vengeance. The same proclivity is in each of them, that is, to act out of Passion; but in the venereal man, for example, the body is peculiarly disposed to inflict venereal Passion on his mind. Hence also for the diversity of localities, ages, conditions, experiences, and so on: certain men are said to be given to certain vices because their body is disposed to this or that Passion in this or that locality, age, and so on, so that the accompanying proclivity or propensity of the mind to act out of Passion results externally in this or that vice.

Accordingly, no blame rests with Passions themselves, as I conclusively demonstrated in § 1 of this Treatise. On the contrary, the corruption consists wholly in weakness of mind, that is, the proclivity to act out of Passion. For the mind, as if joined in marriage with the body, shows by that proclivity that it is like an uxorious man, whom that verse of the Poet hits off exactly:

*He shamelessly was his wife's wife.**

For Passions come to us by way of the body: to be inclined to act on account of them is to want to act on account of the body, and as it were humour and flatter it. There is no doubt that this proclivity involves the sin that Christians have called *original sin*. On this matter I must refer you to Christian sources, lest we get diverted from our study of Philosophy.

§ 6. *The Flesh*

The *Flesh* is a proclivity to Pleasant Good without respect to others. Accordingly, what is meant by the *flesh* here is not venery (as the

* *Uxori nupsit turpiter ille suae*: variation on Martial, *Epigrammata* VIII, 12, 2: *uxori nubere nolo meae*. 'I don't want to be my wife's wife.'

name has quite often been interpreted by others), but a general proclivity to Pleasant Good as such, without consideration of what others may think of us. Moreover, there are many other pleasant goods besides venery, which earlier on I called *favourable things*. See Treatise II on Temperance.

But among favourable things, only honour respects others, and what others think about us, and so must be excluded from consideration as *flesh*. As for other favourable things, to crave them on account of the pleasure that they contain in themselves, is carnal; even the study of literature and Philosophy, in fact even the exercises and Offices of Virtues. We realise from this that those who are charged with the education of rude adolescence in letters, Philosophy, and humanity, but do little to prepare them for the stern demands of Reason, and hold their attention with fables, and the delights of the Muses, are not far removed from *panders*. To them must also be added (even if this seems a little harsh) those who seek to use that Passionate Love which they call *devotion* to attract Christian folk to divine worship, and hold them fixed and stable in it. (See Treatise I, § 1).

Note, that it is not carnal when at the dictate of Reason we make leisure for favourable things to flow with the delights which they naturally afford us; but it is carnal to grasp at them, crave them, and to make leisure for things that have the reputation of being delightful. See the broader discussion in Treatise II on Intemperance and Stupor.

From this we also realise how the *Flesh* has taken possession of the whole of mankind. Adolescence, and the first age of life, are especially threatened by it. For adolescents are unwilling to be led to the study of letters, much less to Philosophy and the embracing of some institution of life, unless it be by Mistress Pleasure; by whom they are more strictly disciplined than by their teachers and mentors, who not unaware of her character, entice them, or rather ensnare them, with indulgences, the charms of the Poets, and the allure of fables. Then, as if they have performed a great matter, and deserve well of the public and of society, when they have thus corrupted the youth entrusted to them, ensnared them, and delivered them wholly to the Flesh, they glory in it, and think themselves worthy of the most lavish rewards.

§ 7. *The World*

The *World* craves the pleasure that is born out of the esteem of other men for us and for our actions; and since we can easily obtain that esteem (inasmuch as it is wholly dependent on the will of others) if we make ourselves obliging to them, worldly men who are benevolent and munificent are often well-regarded by their fellow-citizens and by the public. But all they do is directed towards themselves in the form of glory, esteem, dignity, lavish state, pomp, and similar playthings of the imagination, figments, and chimaeras, which are difficult to express in words. But it is easy to understand what I mean here by worldly men, or men who are sometimes worldly.

The *Flesh*, therefore, respects only itself, and is led only by contemplation of itself, while the *World* lifts up its mind's eye, no higher indeed, but only to disperse and scatter it more widely. I mean that the *World* is chiefly concerned with the same thing as the flesh; it considers only itself, respects others by accident, ordains them to itself, and desires to reap from them a harvest of glory with which to divert and flatter itself. It is, moreover, an easy descent from the *Flesh* into the *World*: for it naturally happens that you assume a sort and condition of life merely because it would please, gladden, and divert you (or, as we say in current vernaculars, merely for your *contentment*), and adhere to it long after you have exhausted the thrill of such diversions in the course of time and use; and you will continue so to adhere to this condition of life, in case people should say that you have chosen badly, in case they should say that you are fickle and inconstant; and in order that you may recommend your condition to others, the better to persuade them to join you in it. And this is how one descends from the *Flesh* into the *World*. For it is the distinguishing mark of the greater part of worldly men, that when they feel themselves to be miserable, and others also (chiefly the virtuous and discerning) understand it, they nevertheless try relentlessly to persuade us, and impose on us the belief that they are happy. Haughty of bearing, pompous, and puffed-up, they want everyone to know how well they are doing, how abundantly provided they are with the animal spirits with which like excellent instruments we perform our natural functions. With sumptuous clothes and furnishings, and display of their wealth and power, they want everyone to know that they will always be able to provide for themselves in this way, even when those spirits have flowed out of their

body and ebbed away. Under this I include also luxury, by which they want everyone to know that they will always have not only enough but more than enough. With their contempt and disdain for others, they want everyone to know that they do not need the favour of others, that they do not desire others' care and assistance. With their raised eyebrows, with their frowns and piercing eyes they want everyone to know that they are free of care, and fear no man, and that on the contrary it is they whom others should fear; and thus with their whole demeanour, countenance, speech, and gesture mimic happiness. But they are withal nothing but simple and rustic worldlings, except that they stalk flattery for far longer, and pursue it with more success—if you can call this success, and not rather servitude and degradation.

Since the way that leads from the Flesh into the World is precipitous, it is not therefore easy to return from the World into the Flesh. Worldly men rarely do anything merely because they find it pleasant, or persevere with what they began to in order to impress others, merely as a pleasure or pastime; as once, when Diogenes was rolling naked in snow and slush, Plato told the onlookers (who out of sympathy or some such popular sentiment wanted to stop him) to disperse, avowing that Diogenes would desist of his own accord as soon as they had dispersed.* And in our own time there are many who free themselves from the Flesh (venery, gluttony, and devotion to pleasures) through the World (Offices, public functions, and status)—as if this were really to free oneself, viz. to exchange masters, and in fact to labour under a worse tyranny.

We may easily gather from what has been said that the World is held in the highest regard among youths and men; and for this reason does not preoccupy as many as the flesh, albeit those with more distinction. The World possesses the flower of mankind (of old times think of the illustrious Romans, and men of a similar breed today); in fact, what is most regrettable, the very ones who would be the best of men if only they were not worldlings, if only they would do for the sake of Reason and God alone the things they do in order to capture the popular mood. And Cicero, the prophet of Glory, that is, of the World, did not hesitate to assert: *The best are motivated*

* In *Vitae Philosophorum* VI, 41, Diogenes Laertius mentions only that people pitied Diogenes because he had got soaking wet.

chiefly by glory;* but he mistook, for such people are not virtuous, but vain. As Scripture says, *They have had their reward* (a little popularity).†
O wretched reward!

§ 8. *The Devil*

The *Devil*, so far as he affects Ethics (and read, and devoutly believe what Holy Scripture says of him), is *the proclivity to persist in some kind of action merely because you have begun to act in this way*. That is, when it is neither pleasure (as that is what we called the *Flesh*), nor Glory or honour (as that is what we called the *World*) that keeps you to a course of action once you have decided and determined on it, but mere stubbornness; and when you persist in it only because you have begun it, even though exhaustion, infamy, loss, poverty, and disease may ensue. There is, moreover, an easy descent from the *World* to the *Devil*. We observe what so often becomes of those who have adopted some austere and harsh mode of life with a view to winning a little glory and celebrity. When this vanity is spent, when there is no more celebrity, no more popular admiration to be obtained, and their extraordinary and affected actions earn only contempt and derision, they are still not able to desist, but press on along a rugged road and a stony path, because over a long period of time they have become habituated to it. This is not because they think it wrong to change course (to the extent that they are still motivated by such corruption and infamy, they are still in thrall to the *World*), but, as I said, because they have begun something from which they are unable to desist.

The *Devil* possesses a great many of the old. In their youth, with the *Flesh* and the *World* egging them on, they settled on a condition of life, and now stubbornly cling to the bulk of it; not because it pleases or suits them, but because it is a habit, and because they have long been accustomed to behave like this; and habit, like a second nature, is difficult to break.

Thus, it is the *Flesh* that attacks and takes possession of most adolescents, the *World* most men, and the *Devil* most old men. But

* Cicero, *Oratio pro A. Licinio Archia Poeta*, Chapter 11, § 29: 'Nunc insidet quaedam in optimo quoque virtus, quae noctes ac dies animum gloriae stimulis concitat.'

† St. Matthew 6:2.

even here the order may be inverted, with the World and the Flesh being found in old men, and the Devil in adolescents; in fact, one and the same man in the space of one brief hour can fall successively under the three tyrants, and be possessed first by the Flesh, then by the World, and finally by the Devil. In the Cardinal Pleasures (to use a figure of speech), such as venery and gluttony, the thing is so obvious that anyone can observe it for himself. For example, they begin to drink because the company is congenial and the drink is to their taste (this is the Flesh in action); but carrying this pleasure to excess, they do not stop drinking, because it is regarded as improper to break off from company before others, but on the contrary it is the thing to take as much as possible, and to excel the others in drinking (this is the World in action). At last, even this limit having been passed, when there is no more pleasure to be had, only disgust, no more glory, but only the shame of drunkenness, vomiting, and the trouble that they cause their host and his servants, and when the derision and contempt of their companions makes itself felt, still they continue to drink, so difficult is it to desist from what they have begun (and this is the Devil in action).

It is clear from all this that *firstly*, among all the enemies of Virtue, the Devil is the most abominable, the most horrible, full of anxiety, exhaustion, and despair; for he is almost devoid of pleasure, either real (for that proceeds from Virtue alone), or counterfeit and pretended, as that comes from the Flesh and the World, which have departed from him who is in thrall to the Devil. True, even in the Devil there is a kind of pleasure, but a horrible, damnable, and abominable pleasure. For since Reason does not dictate persisting in what you have begun, when you persist merely because you have begun, you must persist in the action which you have begun with a certain relish, and because it pleases and agrees with you. You see from this, incidentally, that the Flesh is also to be found in the other enemies of Virtue, and that there are only two kinds of men: one *carнал*, who acts out of pleasure and lust, and because it pleases him; the other *spiritual*, because he is moved by spirit, mind and Reason, and never acts because it is agreeable or because it pleases him, but because it is the right thing to do, and therefore should be done.

Secondly, it is clear that the Devil, inasmuch as it is his nature, is everlasting. He who has given himself over to the Devil wants to persist because he has begun; but this never ceases of its own accord: he will always have begun, and so must necessarily always perse-

vere, because for that reason alone he will judge that he must persevere with what he has begun. Here, by the way, we are struck by an important difference between the *Devil* and the other enemies of Virtue. For the pleasures that the Flesh envisages, and the pomps that gladden the World, are altogether fleeting and transitory, and after they have passed leave behind them only bitter regrets. Hence, they allow a man to come to his senses after they have as it were manumitted him, and released him from his servitude; which has no place with the Devil, to whom servitude is by nature everlasting.

It is clear *thirdly*, that the cunning and resourcefulness of the Devil are insidious, whereas the other enemies of Virtue meet us as if in open array. For the Devil leads astray Philareti, or lovers of Virtue, under the guise of promoting and making greater progress in Virtue, forever urging them on, and continually repeating:

*Well begun is half done.**

In this way, under the semblance of further good to come, he urges on lovers of Virtue as they advance from defect towards the Golden Mean of Virtue and incites them to excess, making this verse of the Poet their epitaph:

When fools flee from vices, they rush to the opposite extreme.†

The Flesh and the World never tempt us to do this. They may also decoy lovers of Virtue, and lead them off the royal road of Virtue, in fact sometimes even set them going in the opposite direction; but for this very reason are less to be feared, because they confront us, and meet us in open array; for those who are to be led away or turned around must not be obstructed, or detained any longer on the path of Virtue. They never assume the likeness of Virtue; they know, and openly admit that Virtue does not agree with them; which the Devil, as we saw, sometimes cunningly pretends, depicting himself as a cultivator and promoter of Virtue.

But against the deceits and seductions of the Devil, a remedy supplied by the Oracle of Reason is to hand: *Nothing in excess!*‡ It warns

* *Quo bene coepisti, fac pede semper eas*: slight variation on Ovid, *Tristia* I, 9, 66.

† *Dum cavent stulti vitia, in contraria currunt*: variation on Horace, *Saturae* I, 2, 24.

‡ *Ne quid nimis!*: Latin phrase from the Greek *Médên ágan*, which in ancient times was inscribed on Apollo's temple at Delphi along with *Gnôthi seauton*, for which see

us that whatever part and matter of Virtue with which we concern ourselves, we must carefully avoid the vice that leads us into excess in that matter. For example, you have decided to behave liberally? *Nothing in excess*, beware of being prodigal. You have decided to behave frugally? *Nothing in excess*, beware lest you prove a miser. You have decided to act nobly? *Nothing in excess*, beware of arrogance. Modestly? Again, *nothing in excess*, guard against cowardice and stupidity. And thus always (for what is never learned well enough cannot be said too often) *nothing in excess*. It is worth noting that the oracle does not say: *Not too little* (as if there were just as much vice in defect as in excess), it says: *Nothing in excess*; because it is from excess that the greater danger threatens, and there is greater temptation by the Devil from this quarter. For when someone has resolved to devote himself to a given Virtue, he will turn his back on the defect that is opposed to it, and advance from that defect to the Golden Mean of Virtue; at which point he should take care that he stops at the Golden Mean and does not continue beyond the Golden Mean into excess, with the Devil urging him on, and telling him to continue because he has begun. Thus, for example, if someone decides to behave liberally, he has thereby already sent enough of a message to miserliness, he has turned his back on it; and continuing on to what lies beyond, comes first upon liberality, lying as if in the midst of the way. If he embraces it, if he adheres to it, then things go well, and he becomes a true lover of Virtue; but if he advances a little further (which is a slippery slope, and an all too easy one, what with the wiles of the Devil, redoubling his cries of *carry on, carry on*), he falls into excess, that is, into prodigality. And the same is true of the matter and Offices of all the other Virtues.

Against these wiles and stratagems of the Devil, Philaretus must raise aloft the banner of Reason; reminding himself not to talk like this: *Continue with what you have begun*, but to say more and more often: *Leave off, even though you may have begun; in fact, no matter how well you may have begun, leave off; or continue, but not just because you have begun, but because it is God's will*. Let him inscribe on his banner this device: *Nothing in excess*.

Which I also inscribe on this Treatise, in making an end of it. *Nothing in excess*.

above, 8 and 31–32. The expression was often used to refer to the wisdom of Solon and occurs in its Latin form in Terence, *Andria*, 61. Cf. Grynæus, 513.

TREATISE V
ON THE REWARD OF VIRTUE

INTRODUCTION

A Reward of Virtue is a *Natural End* of Virtue itself, or something which Virtue by nature serves and produces; but it is not an *Operative End*. For the virtuous do not act with a view to Rewards, nor are they moved to obey the Divine Law just because they know that if they do so, things will go well with them. This is all clear from what has been said earlier.

The following conditions are required for something to be a Reward of Virtue:

First: it must be a property of Virtue; for Virtue itself, and the things that accompany its essence, either as constituents or efficient causes, are rightly not counted among the Rewards of Virtue. For however true that verse of the Poet may be:

*The fairest reward of Virtue is Virtue itself,**

this is nevertheless not the competency of Virtue as such, but of Virtue considered as a property of itself; how this may be is shown later when we come to deal with the Rewards of Virtue. Similarly excluded by this condition are Accidental Rewards of Virtue (such as to be honoured, to be loved by men, to rule over and instruct them, to have abundance of wealth, and so on), which, as we shall see later, are not true Rewards of Virtue; but to be worthy of them, to merit them, these are Rewards, and also properties of Virtue.

The *second* condition is, that it should not be related to an Office, but should be something as it were posterior to an Office. For those

* *Ipsa sibi merces rerum pulcherrima Virtus*: a Latin expression for the idea that virtue is its own reward—a notion widespread among the philosophers and poets of antiquity. The poet here referred to must have been Silius Italicus, who gave a similar expression of the adage in his *Punica* XIII, 663: *ipsa quidem virtus sibimet pulcherrima merces*.

properties of Virtue that are related to an Office (such as Diligence, Obedience, and the other Cardinal Virtues) do not really belong with Rewards; for to some extent they look to the contest, rather than the prize; to work, rather than its wages; to a burden, rather than the lightening of a burden, or a Reward.

The *third* condition is, that a Reward of Virtue be a Pleasant Good for the Operator himself. Hence, even though the glory and honour of God, as such, inasmuch as they are related to God Himself and exist in Him, may be properties of Virtue and also posterior to the Office of Virtue itself, they are nevertheless not Rewards. This is because they are not directed to the Operator as a Pleasant Good for him.

§ 1. *The First Reward of Virtue*

Friendship with God

Friendship is nothing other than *mutual love*. And such love necessarily passes between God and a virtuous man. For a virtuous man loves God precisely by loving Reason and His law (Treatise III, § 8), and therefore God necessarily loves Him in return. For only an utterly base and corrupt man does not love him by whom he sees himself to be truly and genuinely loved. Such baseness and corruption are immeasurably distant from the Divine mind, which is of all beings the most generous, and which accordingly can be loved by no-one whom it does not love infinitely more in return.

I do not claim, however, that our love for God makes us deserve to be loved by Him in return; I claim only that it is a quite certain and infallible argument that, if we love God, He in turn loves us. It is quite certain, for that matter, that God first loves the virtuous man, and that among the first effects of this love is the reciprocal love of the virtuous man loving God in return, a love God has instilled into him, and which alone makes him a virtuous man.

Even though there is a certain kind of Friendship or mutual love between God and a virtuous man, it is not, however, a love that has the same character on both sides. The virtuous man loves God with Obedient Love, a love that does not mount as high as God Himself (as He is so sublime and exalted that it cannot extend to Him), but terminates and ceases in God's Law, or Reason (as is

clear from Treatise III, § 8 and elsewhere). God, on the other hand, loves the virtuous man with Benevolent Love, a love by which He wants to benefit him, and to bestow pleasant goods on him; and this love not only extends and reaches as far as the virtuous man himself, but seems not to stop there but to continue and extend further into God Himself as End-for-which. For God ordains all things to Himself, and makes all things for His own sake; which is lawful and honourable for Him, but corrupt and improper for all of us, as is clear from Treatise I, The Adminicle of Humility. That these loves are respectively such as I have described them, namely, the Obedient Love of God by the virtuous man, and God's Benevolent love of the virtuous man, and that there can be no other kinds of love between them, is abundantly clear from the nature of love and of its various kinds; as I showed in Treatise I, Chapter I near the beginning, and also in Treatise I, at the end of The Fruit of Humility.

§ 2. *The Second Reward of Virtue*

Happiness

The virtuous man loves God (I mean, with a proportionate love, that is, Obedient Love) as much as he can; for he loves Him uniquely, as this love cannot serve two masters, and even if it could, love of God, or His law, is not compatible with love of something else; all of which was demonstrated in Treatise I, Chapter I, § 1–2 (where at the same time you should also consult the Annotations). Hence, it follows that God also loves the virtuous man (again, with a proportionate love, which here is *Benevolent Love*) as much as God can. For it is impossible, and quite foreign to His supreme excellence, that He should allow Himself to be outdone not only in love, but also in proportion; but if the virtuous man were to love as much as possible, while God did not love him in return as much as possible, God would proportionately be outdone by the virtuous man; which, as I said, must be rejected as quite alien to that most excellent of all beings. Since, therefore, the virtuous man is loved by God, that is, by an omnipotent being, and with Benevolent Love so great that that none greater can be conceived or thought, the virtuous man must necessarily be *supremely happy*, receiving from that true benevolence everything that can be either granted to, or hoped for by

anyone. For there is nothing that can stand in its way. He who wishes him well is omnipotent; because He has wished him well, He will act well; He has wished him immensely well, in fact as much as God could do; He will therefore confer immense benefits, in fact as much as God will be able to do.

This happiness of the virtuous man is demonstrated also from the idea of happiness: for he is happy *for whom nothing happens to which he is not minded*; and the mindedness, or intention, of the virtuous man is nothing other than to do what Reason dictates (and if he is otherwise minded, if he has any other intention whatsoever, he is not a virtuous man), and nothing contrary to such mindedness can ever befall the virtuous man, as I inferred at somewhat greater length in Treatise I, The Fruit of Obedience, where I demonstrated conclusively that freedom, which constitutes the middle part of happiness, necessarily accompanies the virtuous man, and can never be separated from him so long as he remains virtuous. For happiness comprises two parts, namely, *to do nothing to which he is not minded*, or to do nothing unwillingly (in which part *freedom* consists), and *to suffer nothing to which he is not minded* (in which consists the second part of happiness, which here is opposed to freedom in general, and may be called *happiness in the strict sense*). Therefore, whatever the virtuous man does, he does willingly, since nothing is at liberty to act on him apart from what Reason dictates is to be done. Whatever he suffers, he suffers willingly, since in Passion, as such (and considered only in itself), there is nothing contrary to Reason, and accordingly neither is there anything to which he is not minded. And these two demonstrations are so striking that nothing can obscure them, as long as we keep our eyes fixed on the force of the argument, as long as we do not turn our mind away from its logic. But as we are quite prone not to attend to, or rather to retreat from that argument into the prejudices of our senses, what has just been demonstrated may soon begin to seem to us very paradoxical, often even ridiculous and inept. We see virtuous men afflicted by a host of troubles, poverty-stricken, often suffering from the disgrace of these, and from disease, tormented by the savagery and cruelty of other men, and, one could say, dying a thousand deaths. But if we call to mind the foregoing demonstrations, and leave behind the prejudices of our senses, we see clearly that when they happen to the virtuous man they are not calamities. Are not such things sent to him by God? It has been shown conclusively that men have no say in the mat-

ter, causing motion being effectively forbidden to men, and granted by God alone only to whom it is due (see Treatise I, Inspection of Oneself). Are they not sent by the best, and at the same time the most amicable and benevolent of beings, one who would want only one thing, that all should be well with the virtuous man? And are they not sent by one who is omnipotent, in whose way, when He has determined to confer a benefit, no-one can stand? How could it be that these things are evil, that they must spell calamity? Does not therefore the virtuous man freely submit to all these things? And is there in all these things anything to which he is not minded, when he cannot be minded against anything except what is contrary to Reason? Or is there something contrary to Reason in these things to which he has to submit and endure? Therefore, there appears to be no reason why we should not say that a man is *supremely happy* even when he has been cast into the Bull of Phalaris, and when he keeps company with all the host of miseries so descanted upon, and so detested by the vulgar.*

But nevertheless, the virtuous man is afflicted. I reply, that it is not an affliction if it does not happen contrary to how he is minded, or to his intention. It is called *affliction* by the vulgar because it comes to them as something to which they are not minded, and which they suffer unwillingly and with reluctance.

You will reply in turn: these things are sometimes troubling to the senses, and therefore inimical to complete and perfect happiness. I reply: so be it. To the mind of the virtuous man, insofar as he is aware of them, they may be troubling and sad; but sensations cannot on their own bring calamity, since we often find them pleasant, and indeed we often quite like things that trouble our senses; so much so that many people take pleasure in, and crave risk and danger, and prepare for it with work and training. Thus, calamity and unhappiness can be caused only by the mind's unwillingness and resistance.

But the virtuous man would rather do without the afflictions of the senses, if that were permitted by sound Reason and God's law. I reply: This is what the Stoics say, who claim that the calamities of the vulgar are not really *evil*, but merely *to be put aside*, and their

* Phalaris, the tyrant of Agrigentum (6th Century B.C.), is reported to have been in the possession of a torture instrument in the form of a brazen bull designed for roasting people alive.

contrary goods not really good, but merely *to be preferred*. But they are seriously mistaken, as Cicero rightly observes in his treatise *On Ends*.* I say, therefore, that the virtuous man neither prefers nor puts aside anything, but leaves it in the balance, and cares only for what Reason dictates; and that when God permits such things to happen they are to be borne, not resisted or fought, and that none of them is to be chosen or preferred before another. For no choice is left to us: our lot† is prescribed for us down to the minutest detail, and enforced with the utmost rigour.

§ 3. *The Third Reward of Virtue*

Peace

Peace consists above all in *quietude and in being devoid of Passions*, or rather, in the absence of that stimulus which Passions have, exciting and disturbing the mind, urging it to do many things, and not to do many things, for the sake of them and out of regard for them (a stimulus that I showed in the preceding Treatise to be nothing other than a propensity and proclivity of our mind to act, or not to act, for the sake of Passions). Of course, the vulgar believe that they calm a Passion when they comply with it; for example, that they calm their sorrow if they drench themselves in tears and sighs; their anger, if they discharge it and lash out; their fear, if they desert their post and take flight. And it is no doubt true, if we examine the mind at that point in time when it yields to Passion; for at the time when they weep and sigh, their sorrow is assuaged; at the time when

* Cf. Cicero, *De finibus bonorum et malorum* III, Chapter 15 ff. for a presentation of the Stoic doctrine. Cicero criticises the viewpoint of the Stoics in book IV, Chapter 12 ff. He rejects their distinctions on the ground that they are merely verbal in Chapter 26, and comes close to Geulinx' view where he attacks the Stoic idea of the equivalence of moral transgressions in Chapters 27 and 28. All this, however, does not mean that Cicero's arguments favour Geulinx' standpoint. Indeed, Cicero offers a fundamental critique of Stoic 'detachment', denouncing the idea that the so-called 'preferables' are morally neutral and thus 'indifferent' to human happiness. It would be interesting to know how Geulinx would have reacted to this. Regrettably, his *Disputationes de summo bono*, which followed the text of Cicero's book, were broken off in November 1668 with the refutation of Epicureanism, without apparently having been resumed. Cf. *Opera* III, 283–360.

† The Latin word here is *pensum*, a word which Beckett uses frequently in *The Unnamable*.

they discharge their anger and lash out, their anger is appeased; and their fear is stilled when they flee. But if we go on to examine the mind subsequently, we find that none of these Passions has been assuaged, diminished, and calmed by compliance, but that on the contrary they have been intensified, increased, and exacerbated. If a man weeps and sighs overmuch, at length he becomes lachrymose and querulous from little or no cause; if someone lashes out overmuch, and unremittingly avenges himself of his injuries, at length he blazes up and rages on the slightest pretext; and so on for other Passions.

But against this, the man who does not yield to his Passions but resists them, only arouses and provokes them all the more, and as a result magnifies and reinforces them (as we also saw above in Treatise IV, *The Philosophic Life*).

Consequently, to these flames (I mean Passions) compliance is like oil, while resisting them is like blowing upon them; in both cases they are magnified and increased. Virtuous men alone (whom I described in Treatise IV, *The Christian Life*), remain to rise happily above their Passions; not that they want to rise directly above them (for what would this be but to seek peace and rest, and openly to depart from the canons of Humility?), but listening to Reason, they neither comply with nor resist their Passions. Hence, they deprive them of nourishment (that is, compliance), and keep away the breeze and every kind of irritant (that is, they do not resist their Passions). What then is left for their Passions but to die away quickly in them?

§ 4. *The Fourth Reward of Virtue*

Instruction and Discipline

With the death of the Passions there arises in the virtuous man a certain lofty repose of mind and a profound silence. For Passions are like unruly and mettlesome boys, tearing about the academy of the mind, causing an uproar, and hindering the mind's attention to Reason, in which we have placed the nature of diligence. These being extinguished in the virtuous man, he remains in a state of exalted silence; with nothing hindering him, wholly focused on Reason, and seeing clearly what it says, he is rendered wise; of which I spoke in Treatise I, *The Fruit of Diligence*.

But, *Wisdom in the mouth of the wise bringeth forth instruction*; and in the case of the virtuous man it comes readily into his mouth. For it is very well known that what we understand rightly, and have weighed very carefully in our mind, we are able successfully to sow in the understanding of others. The Poet evidently also understood this:

*And ready words follow a clear perception.**

Discipline is nothing other than *wisdom instilled into the mind of others through instruction*. For we are so formed by nature that what the wise man has attained by daily contemplation of eternal truths, and acute attention to Reason, he can communicate to others through instruction; and things communicated in this way may be grasped far more easily by others, and understood in a shorter time than if they had had to elicit them by effort and study, and by their diligence in attending to Reason. Thus, we see that things can be imparted within a few months or years in philosophical speculations as well as in (and even in) the practices of the mechanical arts by a wise man or craftsman that have been revealed and discovered by the lucubration and study of many years in such a way that they can easily be learned, grasped, and understood by others (who are accordingly called their *disciples*). Inasmuch as wisdom instilled into the minds of others by a teacher still depends on his direction, and needs to be fostered, and as it were led by the hand, it is called *discipline*. But in due course, *learning* comes also to the disciples, when through their own efforts, study, and contemplation and attention to Reason, they are able to achieve such things as once they achieved only with the help of a teacher. Then, the more often they ruminate on them, and turn them over in their minds, the nearer they come to the stage when they too can bring their wisdom into their mouths and utter it; and now they too are worthy to beget disciples of their own.

* Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 311.

§ 5. *The Fifth Reward of Virtue**Dignity*

Dignity embraces a multiplicity of rewards. For, *firstly*, the virtuous man, in that he is virtuous, is *loveable*, or worthy of the love of all men. *Secondly*, because he is wise, he is *regal*, and worthy of government and empire. *Thirdly*, because he is learned, he is *laudable* and *admirable*, that is, worthy of praise and admiration. *Fourthly*, because he is not only learned but a teacher, and so deserves the best from others, he is therefore also glorious, or worthy of glory.

And firstly, he is *loveable* with both Benevolent Love, and (in proper measure) with Obedient Love, inasmuch as through his learning he reveals the Law of God and Reason to others. Note that I said *in proper measure*, because absolutely speaking, it is not appropriate to love anyone with this kind of love beyond Reason and the Law of God. He is therefore obeyed by a virtuous man as a herald, proclaiming the Law of God, and not as one giving it, as he has no right to do such a thing; and no-one who wishes to give law among men in his own name and authority can be virtuous; in contrast to virtuous men, who continually promulgate and explain the Law of God to others. He is also loveable with Affective Love, since the virtuous man is something most beautiful, most pleasant, and altogether most exceptional, and so wrings tender and pleasant feelings (in which Passionate Love consists) even from foul, inhuman, and barbarous men, in fact even, unwillingly, from his enemies (as experience has long taught us); and sometimes claims it for himself as if in his own right.

From the same source springs the fact that the virtuous man is also *honourable*. For *honour* is nothing other than the acknowledgement that we give to another as a result of the opinion we have formed concerning his virtue. Hence, honour is properly due to no-one but the virtuous man, and is granted to others (such as the rich, the powerful, and suchlike) only with the grossest stamp of disgrace.

From the same source also springs the fact that the virtuous man is also *reverend*, or worthy of *reverence*. For *reverence* consists in acting and speaking with discretion towards him whom we are supposed to revere, and abstaining from the many things that we disapprove, and that seem less agreeable to the morals and character of the

other. From this definition it is clear that among the greater part of humanity the virtuous man is the most worthy of such reverence.

Secondly, because the virtuous man is *wise*, he is the most worthy of government; for no-one is better fitted to rule over others than he who is wiser than others. And this is the origin of the saying: *The wise man is a king by nature*,* and that divine mantra of Plato: *Blessed the land where Philosophers rule, or kings philosophise*.†

Thirdly, because the virtuous man is also *learned*, he therefore also deserves praise and admiration; for men are wont to admire and bestow praises on nothing so much as on discourse that elegantly and limpidly unfolds the arcana of Nature and Reason.

Fourthly, because he is not only learned, but also a *teacher*, and able to train disciples, he is also worthy of glory. For *Glory* is the acknowledgement, expressed with great and unmistakable signs, that we give to another in token of something important and of extraordinary service and benefit to us. Hence, it is nothing but a signal and conspicuous act of gratitude, which the virtuous man undoubtedly merits in the highest degree, inasmuch as he is someone who deserves the best of everyone, being concerned with example and instruction to make them like himself, that is, virtuous men also, than which no greater benefit can be conceived.

To the foregoing dignities of which the virtuous man is worthy (love, honour, reverence, government, praise, admiration, and glory) are added not so much another dignity, but rather a certain nature: for he abounds by nature in indescribable pleasures, and joys that the human mind can scarcely grasp. That is, he is properly speaking not so much worthy of these joys (though he *is* worthy) as well and truly born to these joys, and he tastes this Reward not so much as something of which he is worthy but as a natural thing. I mean that the virtuous man is born to these joys; both because virtue itself naturally engenders them, and because the consideration of his Rewards, which I have in part reviewed, and by which the virtuous man sees himself marked out (for it is impossible that he should not sometimes see them, and be astounded by the admiration that they

* *Sapiens naturā rex est*: Latin saying comparable to those mentioned in Grynaeus, 28: *Rex eris, si recte facies*; 608: *Fortunatus sapiens*; and 610: *Sapiens à seipso pendet*. These sayings, however, reflect the freedom of self-government, not the rule over others. See also Horace, *Saturae* II, 7, 83.

† Plato, *Politeia*, 473 c–473 d.

incur), naturally inspires them. For the virtuous man, even while doing something else, nevertheless often meets his Rewards, and in some way, willingly or unwillingly, is moved to recognise them; and from this recognition derives incredible joy, and exultation of mind.

§ 6. *The Sixth Reward of Virtue*

Friendship with Virtuous Men

Friendship properly speaking holds between virtuous men, and virtuous men alone. For they alone most resemble one another (and resemblance is the promoter of Friendship), they alone want the same, and reject the same; for virtuous men one and all want nothing other than to obey Reason; and being so minded and having such an intention, of whatever sort, condition, race, gender, and age they are they still resemble one another. For the will (as we saw in Treatise III) must be judged according to the end which it has to serve; and the end is the same for all virtuous men, even if they do not always agree on the means. This in no way makes for conflict of will, since the will belongs not to the means but to the end. We have no difficulty in understanding it when two men desire to extort from us the same thing, the one with threats, the other with promises; for though the means (threats and promises) are quite dissimilar, yet the end is the same for each of them. So also then, virtuous men, tending by quite dissimilar means to the same end, are at one in the consent of their will to that end.

In contrast, vicious men are all quite dissimilar; they all want different things, inasmuch as each of them wants himself. And though they may seem at first to want the same thing, this appearance persists only so long as we keep our mind and thoughts fixed on the means with which they at first act in unison; but this is not strictly speaking to act in unison, since the will does not adhere to the means, but merely glides through, and passes from the means in pursuit of its end. So, when we fix our mind on the end, which is properly speaking the object of the will and its adherence, it will be quite obvious that what they want is nothing if not diverse. For example, many people greedy for gain, not to say greedy for gain and fame, may come together in the building and fitting-out of the same ship, or even fleet, which is to sail to the Indies, because such

a ship or fleet is a means suitable to the diverse ends that each of them has in view (one grasps at profit and wealth, another seeks purely to glorify himself). Thus, they differ in their ends, who come together in the means: one and all they look to themselves, and do whatever they do for their own sake. In absolute terms, they dissent: for to consent or dissent in means is to consent or dissent only in some particular respect; but absolute consent or dissent derives from an end.

Therefore, vicious men are in themselves dissimilar (that is, in their end); though *per accidens* they are sometimes similar (that is, in their means). In contrast, all virtuous men are in themselves similar; though often dissimilar *per accidens*. While they may disagree sometimes on the means, they always agree on the end: one, perhaps, philosophises, another serves as a soldier, one engages in trade, another cultivates the land, one values working, another takes frequent holidays, one believes in eating, another believes in fasting; but all agree on one thing, namely, to obey God and Reason. True, virtuous men may disagree among themselves, and seem to be of opposing parties and factions, because one of them labours under invincible ignorance, or because they all labour under some ambiguity, or in some other way, without anyone being to blame, do not rightly understand one another. But even then they still consistently want or do not want the same thing, if you consider how they are minded and their intention; if you consider the judgement of their will.

Therefore, since the root of Friendship between men is nothing other than the agreement of their minds (for *to want the same, and not to want the same, that is perfect Friendship*, according to Cicero*), all virtuous men, and they alone, are necessarily friends. And whereas this is the root of Friendship, mutual love is a shoot that springs from that root. This also exists between virtuous men, and is so essential that they cannot be virtuous men if they do not love one another. For one wants exceedingly what is the supreme good of the other. The virtuous man wants obedience to be displayed to God and Reason, and this is the one thing he wants; but this one and only thing is the supreme good of the other, as he too should desire nothing other than that obedience be displayed to God and Reason; and

* *Idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum perfecta Amicitia est*: the line actually occurs in Sallust, *Bellum Catilinae*, 20, 4: *nam idem velle atque idem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est*.

so, for both of them, that one and only thing is the common principle of their several devotions. It follows that virtuous men choose and want for each other the supreme good, that is, what they desire most ardently, and with mutual and most ardent devotion; but what is this but to wish one another well in the highest degree, what is this but to love one another most ardently? It should be noted that virtuous men want obedience to God and Reason to be displayed not only by themselves, but also, in proportion to how much it is incumbent upon them, and is vouchsafed to them, to be displayed by others, and as well and as perfectly by others as by themselves. For since they are humble, they are not busied with themselves and their own welfare, and therefore they are neither busied with nor value Virtue itself (a fact of which the Ancients were profoundly ignorant) insofar as it is a good for themselves. This can be gathered fairly well from what I have said, especially where I treated intemperance as directed towards the last class of favourable things. Hence, virtuous men want as much obedience to be displayed to God and Reason, whether by themselves or by others, as there is in themselves, and is incumbent on themselves.

There is also an accidental kind of mutual love that passes only between virtuous men, which consists in the accidental Rewards of Virtue that virtuous men afford one another; and it is this kind of Friendship, accidental as it is, and so also an accidental Reward of Virtue, that we must now discuss.

§ 7. *The Seventh Reward of Virtue*

The Accidental Reward

This is nothing other than an effect of the dignity which I discussed in § 5. And just as the dignity which *essentially* accompanies Virtue is manifold, so also is the effect which *accidentally* attaches to that dignity, namely, *to be loved, to be honoured, to be praised, to be revered, to rule* or to be a king, *to enjoy admiration and favour, to be celebrated, and to flow* with the ineffable *pleasures* attaching to these. What I am saying is that when the virtuous man comes by these, they are accidental Rewards of his virtue; they can also be separated from Virtue, whilst the Rewards mentioned earlier are necessarily linked to Virtue. For the virtuous man is necessarily loveable, though often he is not

loved but hated; he is honourable, though often he is not honoured but held in contempt; he is worthy of reverence, though often he is held not in reverence but in derision. Thus, he often knows also a hard servitude (I mean, as far as external appearance goes), though he is worthy of command; in the same way, he is not always spared derision, even though he deserves to be praised for his learning, inasmuch as his learning is seen as stupidity and fatuity (which seems to have been the case with Democritus); and though he is worthy of repute, he often suffers from ill-repute, inasmuch as his teaching seems to smack of impiety (as seems to have been the case with Socrates). Lastly, even though he was born for joy, he is often afflicted by horror, sadness, and tedium, and has to contend with similar emotions that trouble his mind, because he is a man, and cannot divest himself of his senses as long as by God's will he continues to have a body. To such men falls that accidental Friendship on which we touched somewhat in the preceding Section; for this too is one of the accidental Rewards of Virtue, and consists in the honour, praise, rule, and the other effects of dignity which virtuous men bestow on one another. For since the virtuous man is honourable, that is, one who is, on account of Reason, worthy of honour, virtuous men never acknowledge the fact unless at the same time they are ready to honour him. Otherwise they would act contrary to Reason, which dictates that he is worthy of honour, or to be honoured. Similarly, since the virtuous man is worthy of rule, virtuous men offer it to him, and he in turn willingly offers the same good to others. There is nothing so common among virtuous men as their complete willingness to let themselves be directed by virtuous men. Since the virtuous man is also worthy of praise on account of his learning, virtuous men praise him, and thereby mutually praise each other; and are each other's disciples and teachers. There is almost no more signal mark of virtue than readiness to learn from another what he can teach that has its foundation in Reason.

When virtuous men share these Rewards among themselves, then there passes between them not only essential and philosophic Friendship, but also Friendship in the vulgar sense, and such as the vulgar easily observe and recognise. But this kind of Friendship is lost to many virtuous men, inasmuch as they may not have gained sufficient acquaintance with each other; for they are not only sometimes isolated from each other, but also are sometimes in each others' company without being aware of their common virtue. This is because

the mind and intention of men, on which all virtue depends, are not in themselves apparent, but often can be perceived only by conjecture from the means that are outwardly applied to the end that they have set themselves to pursue; and these means are often quite ambiguous, for virtuous men differ enormously from vicious men in intention, and in how they are minded, while in respect of external actions they often differ little, as can be seen in Treatise I, especially The Sixth Obligation.

Accidental Rewards of Virtue are sometimes twisted, and as it were deflected onto men of no virtue (for they too are often honoured, and rule, and so on), for whom properly speaking there are neither Rewards nor goods, because such things do not square with them. They are not worthy of them; but all the goodness and pleasure, the whole reason of those Rewards, depend on dignity and propriety; for what good does it do you to be honoured when you know yourself not to be worthy of honour? This is not to be honoured, but rather to be made sport of, and ridiculed. Or if the honour, that is, the honour of being esteemed a virtuous man, is conferred on you out of the ignorance of others, it does you no honour, but falls on another person, the one whom they had believed you to personify.

§ 8. *The Ultimate Reward of Virtue*

Virtue itself

Now that the virtuous man, at last quite peaceful and calm, quite free from the turmoil of his passions, is wholly open to Reason, and accordingly is prepared for wisdom, learning, and disciples, love towards Reason grows exceedingly in him out of the acute and assiduous contemplation of Reason and Divine Law. For Reason is so fair and heavenly that (as the saying goes which is normally applied to the arts and sciences) *one's only enemies are the ignorant*.^{*} And this love of Reason in turn is Virtue again (as is obvious from the definition of Virtue), and Virtue itself is also among its own Rewards, and indeed the fairest and greatest Reward of Virtue; and is its own wages, as the Poet also realised, when he said:

^{*} *Neminem [habet] inimicum nisi ignorantem*: variation on the Latin aphorism *Ignorantia scientiae inimica*. Cf. Grynæus, 304.

*The fairest reward of Virtue is Virtue itself.**

Thus one is borne upon a heavenly and timeless circle from Virtue into Virtue. Happy he who has enclosed himself and all his desires within this circle, and who in consequence wishes to be virtuous so much that he becomes ever more and more virtuous.

§ 9. *The Penalty of Sin*

There is not a single penalty, but many; all of which I shall touch upon quickly and briefly in this Section.

Sin being nothing but self-love, it follows that there first arises in vicious men *a diligent attention to their conveniences and pleasures*, and to the means by which these things can be obtained; and such *care of this world* (as Christians term it) is the counterpart of Diligence; for just as Diligence is the eldest daughter of Virtue, so Care is the eldest daughter of Sin. And it is accompanied by great sadness and anxiety. The Sadness arises from how much they seem to fall short of their good (that is, themselves), which they love exclusively and at such expense; and the Anxiety from how difficult it seems to fill the gap left by all the things by which they fall short, and because they are at such pains to fulfil their desires. They learn from experience, and from their very sensations (as they do not pay much attention to Reason), that the more they have the more they desire; and that as a result they are always in want and poverty-stricken, no matter what circumstances they happen to find themselves in. From care, like the fruit of an ill vine, are born cunning, cleverness, and resourcefulness (which Christians call *the prudence of this world*), which consist in the perception and understanding of how to obtain their conveniences and pleasures.

Next arises that servitude (the counterpart of Obedience among the daughters of Virtue) with which vicious men are enslaved to themselves as they pursue all the things that their resourcefulness has taught them tend to their convenience. The bitterest fruits of this are the endless tedium, calamities, vileness, and slavishness to which they must needs subject themselves in their self-serving course,

* See above, 127, footnote.

as in the process of this abject servitude many things happen to them to which they are not minded. How often are the means that they have so cunningly applied to their conveniences and pleasures frustrated of their result and desired success! A ship is made ready, fitted-out, and weighs anchor for the Indies, but is plunged into a storm, or captured by pirates. A speech or lecture is perfectly pitched to secure fame and praise, composed with the utmost care, and elaborated by exhaustive study, but no honour ensues, no applause, only mockery and derision. It is clear enough from what was said earlier that none of these things can befall the virtuous man; for he wants only to obey his Obligations, which he still obeys even when the means which seemed bound to lead to the given end seem to be frustrated of success.

After servitude, or along with it, arises *narrow-mindedness* (which is the counterpart to Justice among the daughters of Virtue). The *narrow-minded* do exactly what looks to them and their interests, and no more; for example, they do good to others only and insofar as they see themselves being repaid, or that it looks to fame, pomp, and similar passions; nothing more, however much Reason may urge them to do something more. If they come across someone in a public place seriously injured, they will come to his aid, call for assistance from passers-by, fetch a doctor, and so on (as they hope to win repute, and fear ill-repute if they act otherwise). But if they happen upon the same scene far away from home, they will cross to the other side of the road, and do nothing to help. If moved by pity perhaps they might even do something, but on finding a total stranger or deadly enemy in the same plight, they will do nothing, and will not come to his aid, inasmuch as pity in this case is against their interest and will be overridden by hatred. Thus, they always do just as much as self-consideration permits, and no more.

From this narrow-mindedness arises *desertion*. Vicious men desert their own kind, and in turn are deserted by their own kind. These verses are an apt description of them:

*In sunshine days, your friends will abound,
When clouds roll in, they're no longer around.**

* *Dum fueris felix, multos numerabis amicos/Tempora cum fuerint nubila, nullus erit:* variation on Ovid, *Tristia* I, 9, 5–6, *donec eris sospes [felix], multos numerabis amicos/tempora si fuerint nubila, solus eris.* Cf. Grynaeus, 46: *Felicitas multos habet amicos.*

They are mutual with him, are close at hand, and will help him, for as long as this mutuality pays dividends (as they say); but with this cause removed, they disperse, leaving each other in dire calamities and extreme anxieties.

But you will say: even virtuous men sometimes desert each other, when either they cannot help, or even believe, out of invincible ignorance, that they ought not to help them. I reply: virtuous men properly speaking never desert each other, but are always closely joined, now in spiritual concourse, now also in mutual love, as is clear enough from what I said concerning Friendship. Virtuous men nevertheless sometimes desert each other in an accidental sense, namely, when it comes to the outward Offices and the accidental Rewards of Virtue; but this does not merit consideration when we reflect on that bond between them, which is essential. And it is true that vicious men also sometimes desert each other merely accidentally; but it is worthy of note that neither will they have been essentially joined. Since each of them loves only himself, they are and always were deserted and abandoned by each another, without any true conjunction and consensus of minds; they usually conspire only over means, a conspiracy that I called an *accidental connection* when I dealt with Friendship. It is therefore not to be wondered at if vicious men are so struck and alarmed when they see that that accidental connection has been dissolved, because they have no other connection with each other, no Friendship, not even with God (as that is the first and proper Reward of Virtue alone); and in such a case see themselves cut off as if by a single blow, and deserted by everyone. But virtuous men are not greatly afflicted, even though they too may often see themselves accidentally deserted, even by virtuous men; for they readily see that they remain closely joined with their God, whose intimate friends they are. Then they see also that with those by whom they seem to be deserted there remains that essential connection which consists in the perfect concourse of minds, perfect agreement, and the most fervent mutual love; and that this cannot be lost as long as virtuous men are virtuous.

After servitude, narrow-mindedness, and desertion there arises from sin its most disgraceful daughter, *arrogance*, which is nothing other than *contempt of Reason*; so that sin is in its order *perverse*, and posterous. For Virtue, which alone is in order, begins from love of God or Reason, and terminates and is consummated in contempt of oneself; but sin begins in reverse order from love of oneself, and

terminates and is consummated in contempt of Reason and God. Hence it is deservedly called *perversity*.

Over the course of time, as Reason becomes more and more clouded by Passions, which increase day by day, the more the ignorant despise and neglect it, and the more selfish they become, looking after themselves in all things. And this is how sin comes to be also its own punishment.

As for the *indignity* of vicious men, it can be elucidated through an analogy with the corresponding dignity of virtuous men. They are *hateful*, they are *servile*, in fact *slaves*; they are infamous, or *worthy of infamy*; they are *contemptible*; they are heir to incredible *anxieties*, wretched sorrows, and the sickness of despair. All of this is abundantly clear from the foregoing.

§ 10. *The Antipathy of Vicious Men towards Virtuous Men*

Now Virtue consists in an intention or determination of the mind. This in itself is concealed, and not for the eyes of other men; yet at the same time, especially in the face and eyes, it reveals itself with I cannot say how much pleasantness and nobility, whereupon it arouses in vicious men a multitude of Passions, which we can name aversion, tedium, distaste, contempt, and in a word, *antipathies*.

Secondly, vicious men, apprehending the *diligence* of virtuous men, which they interpret principally as an aversion from sensible things, regard virtuous men as nothing but stupid, dull, and insensible; that is, because virtuous men send a bill of divorcement to the sensible things with which vicious men are preoccupied and immersed, and on which they see them expending so much effort. The prudence and wisdom that virtuous men pursue diligently vicious men regard as nothing but folly, and as something which in no way instructs virtuous men about what is in their interest, but rather renders them dull and insensible to where their interests seem to lie.

The *Obedience* with which virtuous men pursue what Reason has dictated, they hold to be insufferable madness, and as the height of folly. Yet up to a point they take virtuous men to be people who are speculatively engaged in the business of Virtue; in fact, they sometimes even number themselves among virtuous men (for it seems to them to be glorious, and proof of an acute and subtle wit); but in practice, in the business of life, they believe that it comes down

to sheer insanity. *These things do not*, they say (as the current phrase has it) *earn one's crust; they don't keep the home-fires burning*.*

As for *Justice*, vicious men take it for futility, triviality, and misery. And since Justice satisfies only God and Reason, it is hardly enough for vicious men.

Finally, it is *Humility* alone which they sometimes marvel at in virtuous men. Their hypocrisy has its origin here; for almost all vicious men, when they are selling themselves to others behind a mask of Virtue, begin by pretending humility. For this reason, humility sometimes renders virtuous men safe among vicious men; for they who neglect their own interests and serve only God and Reason do not stand in the way of those who want to grab everything for themselves. From this it also comes about that vicious men, in order to protect themselves from each other's frauds, plunders, and violence, may pretend to be humble, and that they have no thought for their own interests, but have time only for God and Reason; hoping in this way to avoid each other's traps (and often enough do safely avoid them).

However, because the humble man neglects his own interests in order that he may continue to obey God and Reason, which often enjoin him to aspire to the dignity and the wealth that vicious men seek for themselves, it often happens that virtuous men and vicious men are competitors and co-rivals, that is, they pursue and solicit the same things, no doubt with quite diverse intentions, but nevertheless the same things. It is then that virtuous men are held by vicious men in the most intense loathing. They had thought, and brought themselves to believe that virtuous men must be content with their God and their Reason (and virtuous men are indeed so content, and willingly yield to others unless God commands otherwise), and that they must be given no right to the things of this world, must be excluded from dignities and public duties, and barred from wealth and honours. This is why vicious men take the virtuous man far more badly as a competitor than as one with some degree of likeness to themselves, that is, vicious.

As for the *Rewards of Virtue*, it is notorious that they arouse the most monstrous envy in vicious men, though the fairest of these

* *Non sunt haec de pane lucrando; His caminus non fumat*: expressions also familiar in Dutch: 'Daar valt geen droog brood mee te verdienen'; 'Daar kan de schoorsteen niet van roken.'

Rewards are also those which are concealed from vicious men; and especially, the *Friendship* that holds between God and the virtuous man, which they ridicule and scoff at, as a melancholic and silly fiction. But when they espy some of the external fruits of this Friendship, and how things go so well with virtuous men, so much so that with all their frauds, tricks, and artfulness, with all their savagery and power, vicious men are unable to achieve or outdo them—then they explode with rage, belching out curses not only against virtuous men, but sometimes (terrible to relate) even against Him who watches over virtuous men, that is, God. For they take nothing so badly, nothing with more sense of indignation, than when humble men, while taking no thought for themselves, do so well, and act in their own interests; just as if they had done the one thing that of course they never do, that is, consider their own interests above everything. Thus, they are sometimes given to saying that *the stupid and the lucky have no need of wisdom*;* perversely conceiving wisdom to be nothing but their own cunning and tricks, with which they represent and market themselves as wise men.

As for *Peace with the Passions*, that is, the tranquillity of virtuous men, to vicious men it seems superficially attractive and pleasant enough; and so they regard it as an accomplishment to have it as well. But finding themselves so utterly lacking in it, they simulate it with the loftiest pretence and hypocrisy. As a result you come across some of them who are veritable apes of the most patient and modest men.

As for *Wisdom*, I have already spoken of it; vicious men hold it to be stupidity. But they hate worst of all in virtuous men their *teaching*, especially when they see themselves painted by them to the life, and all their perversities and calamities delineated in their true colours, and described so graphically; which many virtuous men do with such skill that they seem godlike, looking into their intimate thoughts, and penetrating and invading the miseries that vicious men conceal with such lofty pretence (as you can see in part in the subsection where I spoke of the World). So it is also, that when virtuous men speak of generalities in their *teaching* (for their learning and knowledge are of universals, not of singulars, as the Scholastics were fond of saying, and rightly), they expound the matter in such a lively

* *Stolidis et felicibus nihil opus est sapientiâ*: Latin saying of unknown origin.

fashion, and hit the nail so squarely on the head (so to speak), that vicious men who happen to overhear them think that they themselves are being singled out and analysed. This exasperates them so greatly that they will often conspire in the death of virtuous men. Christians have called this kind of death *martyrdom*, and commemorate how it has befallen so many virtuous men on account of their teaching.

Vicious men also despise the *dignity* of virtuous men, but yet prize the Effects of this dignity, that is, the accidental Rewards of Virtue, and generally want to claim them for themselves. They do not want to be honourable, but to be *honoured*; not to be regal, but to be kings and tyrants; not to be praiseworthy, but *praised*; and lastly, not to be worthy of pleasures, or to be like those who are shaped by nature for pleasures, but simply to have pleasures. From all this it is very clear that inwardly they neglect God, Essence, Nature, and Dignity, and adhere only to accidents and contingencies, and are wholly taken up with them; which constitutes their vanity, as Christians know well.

And because these accidental Rewards cannot, without Virtue, be had in their genuine and pure form, vicious men are all more or less hypocrites; and just as they have only the appearance of Virtue, not Virtue itself, so also they have only the appearance or shadow of this or that Reward of Virtue, while never attaining the actual Reward. For the *Honour* (to take one example to stand as a model for all) displayed by vicious men is extorted by force, got up by flattery, or granted out of ignorance; and who does not see that there is no honour in such honours? For what is granted through ignorance—when, that is, vicious men are adjudged virtuous—can indeed be true honour, but it will fall not on them, but on the person deemed worthy of it, that is, on the person of a virtuous man; and what is made up by adulation is made up indeed, and no more touches on true honour than what a crowd of attendants and gentlemen accords a stage tyrant in the theatre. Lastly, what is extorted by force is worth no more than any other contract that is extorted by threats: it is as null by law as by the light of nature. And in general, everyone understands quite clearly that a testimonial that we may give to a robber holding us at knifepoint in the forest is no testimony, and cannot be of any use to him anywhere else, even if it testifies a thousandfold that he is a virtuous man. The same applies equally to government, pleasure, and the other accidental Rewards

of Virtue on those occasions when they seem to be ambushed and taken hostage by vicious men. When such Rewards are examined closely, and not just judged superficially, we shall see that with vicious men they are all bogus, and are there only to impress the vulgar with a name and outward appearance; for the rest, they lack the thing itself and its energy.

TREATISE VI
ON PRUDENCE

INTRODUCTION

We are now in a position to see in what the nature of Virtue consists. Let us first look at the principles of conduct that Reason (which we love because of Virtue) dictates to us, and that we have glimpsed through diligent attention to Reason, and other men before us have apprehended; for this is the business of Prudence. And it is this part of Ethics, that is, this present Treatise, which can most aptly be described as Ethics, as it embraces Practice, the preceding parts inclining more to Theory and Metaphysical speculation.

Prudence in the widest sense comprises four parts, namely, *prudence in the proper sense* (with which I dealt in Treatise I under Diligence), *circumspection*, *providence*, and *discretion*. We are only then required to speak here of the three remaining parts.

§ 1. *Circumspection*

Prudence in the proper sense considers Reason itself, and perceives what it dictates; but *circumspection* considers action, and disposes and orders it according to its circumstances, so that it concurs with the dictates of Reason in all things; or in other words, *circumspection* sees to it that the action is in accordance with Reason as considered by prudence. Just as a painter first considers his subject, for instance, a man whom he has undertaken to paint, and then, with the subject in view, fashions a painted likeness—so Prudence in the proper sense perceives what Reason dictates, and Circumspection frames and orders the action according to that perception in such a way that in obeying it the action reproduces perfectly what Prudence has perceived as Reason's dictates.

Circumspection is therefore concerned above all with the circumstances of actions, taking care of them and performing them at the dictate of Reason. For what is lawful and decent in some circumstances is

in others unlawful and indecent. For example, it is lawful for a magistrate to sentence to death a defendant convicted of a capital offence, but for a private citizen it is not lawful; it is lawful for a wealthy man to entertain a host of friends to dinner, not so a poor man; in one place it is lawful to go about without lights, in another place, where a magistrate forbids the same, it is not lawful.

The circumstances with whose consideration Circumspection is occupied, are summarised in this well-known list:

Who? What? Where? With what assistance? Why? How? When?

1. Who?

Who denotes the person and condition of an agent; for example, whether he is a magistrate or a private citizen; whether a wealthy man or a poor man; whether skilled in the business at hand, or unskilled, and so on. And within this condition the decency and indecency of the action vary exceedingly; for what is lawful for a magistrate is often not lawful for a private citizen; what is lawful for a rich man is often not lawful for a poor man, and *vice versa*. For example, a rich man can give alms, a poor man cannot; a poor man can receive alms of many from whom a rich man cannot decently accept alms; and so on.

The maxim, and as it were oracle, in this circumstance is what Reason lays down in these sayings: *Know thyself*, and *One step at a time*. That oracle is of surpassing wisdom, and from it, with the help of the Dear Lord, I have deduced the whole of Ethics, as can be seen in Treatise I, Inspection of Oneself. Here, the oracle must be applied to more familiar and more frequent considerations, such as whether you are in good health or ill-health, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, indigenuous or of alien origin, and an infinity of such things, concerning which moral action varies a great deal. And it is prudence that determines from its ever-present guiding principle, that is, Reason, what is to be done or not done.

2. What?

This particle designates *the action to be performed*, and also the outcome that the action presupposes; for example, whether to go for a walk,

whether to apply yourself to your studies at home, whether to invite anyone to dinner, and if so, whom to invite, whether to write a letter, give money, and so on.

The maxim here is: *Nothing in excess*; of which sufficient was said in Treatise IV, On the Devil.

3. Where?

This particle designates *the place and the persons surrounding the action*; whether, that is, the action is done in private or in public, whether with others, or in the absence of a witness, whether among the learned and intelligent, or whether among idiots and savages. And it is quite clear that the action may be in some persons lawful and praiseworthy, in others unlawful and blameworthy. Thus, for example, to discuss the profound and subtle questions arising from Metaphysics and Ethics with the vulgar may be dangerous, and even not without vice; but with virtuous and wise men wholly justified, and exceedingly useful. If you assert that it is a sin to do anything violent if you are moved solely by mercy and compassion, it sounds bad to the vulgar, but those who are acquainted with true Ethics have no difficulty with it. They recognise that what is to be done rightly must be done out of Reason, and that whatever is done out of Passion is viciously done.

The maxim here is: *Thou, O God, seest all things*; whereby we are admonished that God, in whatever place we act, is always watching us with His mind's eye. We never withdraw so far from all others that we might flee from God; we are never so covert and concealed that we are not bare and open to His eyes; for nothing is hidden from Him who by His essence and nature is omniscient. Therefore, it should seem to us to be foolish to think to hide ourselves by fleeing from human eyes while remaining exposed to divine eyes.

We must take care to get things right here, in case our wish to act according to this maxim should lead us to act out of fear, or some similar emotion, such as fear of somehow bringing upon ourselves retribution for our sins. Hence, we must abstain from sins, but in such a way that, having Him continually before our eyes, we do not forget the law that He has given us, and always obey it. Beware also lest we allow men to take the place of God with us, or some man to be thrust upon us whom we must always keep before

our eyes when we are alone, as Epicurus advocated. *We should choose some virtuous man, he says, and keep him always before our eyes, to live as if beneath his gaze, and do everything as if he were observing it.* (Seneca, *Epistles*, 11.)* And in *Epistles*, 25: *Do everything just as if Epicurus were watching you.*† In which case, since they are alone, it is themselves whom they want to have for eyes; but moral discipline is wholly subverted by such a vicious substitute for God, in which men are accustomed to hold themselves up for self-appraisal; nor do they act according to the strict norm of Reason, but to a Lesbian rule of vanity and opinion. There was one good thing in the solitude that is disturbed by the imaginary applause to which Epicurus appeals, which Seneca in the places cited so vigorously embraces, and to which natural vice has made us more than sufficiently prone; and that is, that the virtuous man will have God always before his eyes, not some man, but God alone, whereby he may accustom himself to obey Reason not as coming from *him* (which is quite slippery, and most certainly inclines to self-love), but as coming from God, that is, conceived by the mind of God and transmitted by Him to us in the form of law.

4. With what assistance?

This particle designates *the means that we apply to the end*. And the means, if they are good in themselves, will nevertheless not thereby be absolutely good unless our intention and end are also good. On the contrary, if the means are bad, they do not thereby become good just because the end is good. For example, to give alms to the poor is good in itself, but to give alms to the poor in order that you may suborn them into accusing or killing an innocent man is bad. On the other hand, while it is good to save one's life, to slay an innocent man (for example, at the instigation of a tyrant who threatens you with death unless you slay the innocent man) in order to save your own life is bad. As an axiom of Ethics has it: *an evil means pollutes the best of ends, and the best of ends does not purify an evil means.*‡ The example just cited makes both parts of the maxim clear,

* The Epicurus fragment is in fact known only from Seneca's text. Cf. *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 11, § 8.

† Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 25, § 5.

‡ *Malum medium inquinat optimum finem, et optimus finis non expurgat malum medium*: Scholastic expression of unknown origin.

but they can also be expressed in this way: *Evil things should not be done in order that good things may come of them; and good things that are done in order that evil things may come of them are not good things.**

The maxim here is: *Great oaks from little acorns grow*—whereby we are counselled not to be ashamed of means that are low and of little or no importance, if ends of the highest importance depend on them. For example, one brief hour, even a quarter of an hour each day, is of great importance in Ethical matters, and most of all in the Inspection of Oneself, though it may seem of light and small moment; for in it we may pursue that most excellent of ends, namely, Virtue and Wisdom. Similarly, even though it might appear a base and trifling thing, if you devote just a little of each day to the study of Logic you will soon attain that perfect fluidity and adaptability of mind necessary for the acquisition of human knowledge.

This maxim is valid also in evil matters; for from the most venial sins, when they are dismissed as of no importance, one ascends easily to the summit of wickedness, like that thief in Aesop's *Fables*, who, when about to receive the supreme measure of punishment, pretending to kiss his mother as if offering her a last Farewell bit off her nose, adding this saying: *If, when as a boy I first stole a book from my schoolmate, you had punished me as I deserved, I would not have come to this pass.*† Thus, one should never heedlessly allow what has even the slightest aspect of evil.

So also, starting from Logical errors that seem quite light, the observance of which hardly seems worth the effort, men fall into the most serious errors, heresies, and impieties, in both Physics and Metaphysics; as is clear, for example, from that faulty definition of *Body*, from which alone there arises confusion of spiritual with material things, a confusion that is the surest source of every kind of impiety. (See my *Metaphysics*, Part 2.‡)

* *Non sunt facienda mala ut eveniant bona; et non sunt bona, quae fiunt ut inde eveniant mala*: Scholastic maxim expressing the view of St. Paul in Romans 3: 8.

† Aesop, *Fabulae*, Fable 30, 'Mother and Son' or 'The Young Thief and his Mother.'

‡ Though *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 2, discusses *Body*, the confusion of spiritual and material things seems to be a subject dealt with only in "Scientiae" 5 and 6 of Part 1 and corresponding Annotations. Cf. *Opera* II, 150–152 and 268–269/*Metaphysics*, 34–38.

5. Why?

Why denotes *the end that is incumbent upon us*; and this end is to obey God and Reason, which is clear enough from what has been said many times before.

The maxim here is: *Do what you undertake*. We are said *to do this*, and also *to do what we undertake*, when we do just as much as the end requires. When we do something extra, something that does not serve the end that is incumbent upon us, we are then said to do something else. For example, so long as a traveller hastens and continues straight on without interruption to the place to which he is making his journey, he *undertakes the journey*, and *does what he undertakes*; but if, detained by the charms of the meadows along the way-side, the pleasures of the byways, or the tales of wayfarers, he lingers in the way and suspends the journey that he has undertaken, then he does something else.

The maxim therefore counsels us to measure our means according to the end, and to occupy ourselves with them only in proportion to how much they do to further the end, neither more nor less. For example, God has ordered us to live; do you want to obey Him? If so, you should want to live only as much as He has ordered, neither more nor less; and so, if adversity should assail you, not depart unbidden by Him. If death creeps up on you, do not desire a longer life. And because you want to live, do you not also want to eat? Eat, therefore, and drink, but only in proportion to what is necessary for life. And because you want to eat and drink, will you not pursue a condition of life that procures food and drink? But pursue it only so far as is necessary to those things: let not ambition impel you towards a greater condition, nor cowardice towards a lesser condition. Do you not want to refresh your mind so that it is equal to its Office? Refresh it in proportion to how much is required for it to be equal, lest luxury make you dissolute, or a scrupulous and perverse austerity oppress you.

The maxim thus recommends to you a certain kind of justice, which consists in proportioning the means to the end, in order that there should never be present in the means anything more or less than the end requires. For means frequently have a capacity to divert us from the contemplation of the end, and detain us in contemplation of themselves; indeed, so much so as to divest themselves of the character of means and endow themselves with the character of an

end, immediately leading us towards the sin of those who invert the order of things, and make an end out of what should have been the means. It is just like the way we prefer to go on living when on the point of death: we do not then have the law of God as our *Obedient End*, rather we ourselves are our own *Concupiscent End*; that is, we are the *End-for-which*, and our life is the *End-of-which*. Similarly, when we indulge in eating more than is required for life, we do not have *life* as our *subordinate end* (as should be the case), rather we have the pleasure to be obtained from eating as our *ultimate end*. And if we would like a more luxurious condition of life than suffices to sustain life, we do not then have eating as our *subordinate end* (as should be the case), rather we have as our *ultimate end* a pleasure in worldly things obtained from status and display. And if we would like to refresh and restore ourselves more fully than is necessary to replenish our flesh, then we do not have as our *subordinate end* the correct performance of our Office, rather we have the very pleasure of refreshing and restoring ourselves as our *ultimate End-of-which*.

6. How?

How signifies *the manner of an action*; for instance, whether languidly or fervently, whether jokingly or seriously, whether rudely or courteously, whether the action is done in a feigned manner or sincerely.

The maxim here is: *Seriously and sincerely*.* We are said to do something *seriously* which is done not in jest, not even languidly, but carefully, wholeheartedly, and deliberately. And every action of the virtuous man should be *serious*; not that to joke, laugh, or play is forbidden, but that when these occur in the virtuous man, they should in some way express his nature, change, cease to be ludicrous, and become in the highest degree serious. For to joke, to laugh, to play, in the spirit in which these are displayed by the virtuous man, and which is described in Treatise I On the Sixth

* *Serio et Sincere*: Note that Geulincx carried *Serio et Candide* as his personal motto. Cf. Jean Noël Paquot, *Memoires pour servir a l'histoire litteraire des dix-sept provinces des Pays-Bas, de la principauté de Liege, et de quelque contrées voisines*, vol. 13, Leuven: De l'imprimerie academique, 1768, 72. The motto was reproduced on the titlepage of the Antwerp edition of Geulincx' *Questiones quodlibeticae in utramque partem disputatae* (1653). Cf. Victor Vander Haeghen, *Geulincx. Étude sur sa vie, sa philosophie et ses ouvrages*, Gent: Eug. Vanderhaeghen, 1886, 5, note 9.

Obligation, is not then to joke, laugh, or play, but to follow the law of God as seriously and wholeheartedly as possible.

Every action of the virtuous man must also be done *sincerely*, that is, not displayed outwardly otherwise than as inwardly conceived by him. For there is no reason why he should pretend anything, seeing that what he does is the best; nor does he need to study to please men, but only to obey God and Reason. Nevertheless, there is sometimes a need for discretion: even though the virtuous man pretends nothing, he conceals certain things and expresses them by silence; even though he never consents to the wickedness of others, he sometimes does not reprove it, or oppose it either in word nor deed. In this case, the virtuous man seems to those who are more imprudent to act in a feigned manner, and with pretence; but they err, for it is one thing to hide the truth, another to lie; and again, it is one thing to co-operate with someone's wickedness, another not to oppose it, as we shall see a little later when we come to deal with Discretion.

7. When?

This particle signifies the time at which an action is to be performed.

The maxim here is: *Slow to deliberate, swift to act*, whereby we are counselled not to act except after mature deliberation, pondering circumspectly the action and its circumstances. And let us not linger over the action that we perform after mature deliberation, or interrupt it with deviations, but bring it in one continuous movement swiftly and industriously to its end; the argument of which is clear enough from the principles of these Ethics.

§ 2. *Providence*

From *Circumspection* there follows naturally *Providence*. For when we diligently consider the circumstances of the action to be performed (which is the office of Circumspection), we readily see what could arise from our action, both for ourselves and for other men (which is the function of Providence).

The first part of Providence is clearly *to beware of Scandal*, which is nothing other than an occasion for sinning furnished by the action

of another. Thus, if you insult someone, he may, being thereby enraged and inflamed, strike back by other means, and it may come to swordplay. In this case, your action in causing the insult is a form of Scandal.

Scandal is divided into *given* and *accepted* (Theologians call the former Scandal of the weak, the latter Pharisaical Scandal). Scandal *given* is Scandal *arising from the fault of him who causes it*; such as inviting, exhorting, and urging others to drink to excess, which may result in their becoming drunk. Scandal *accepted* is Scandal *without any fault of him who causes it*, but only *with the fault of him who accepts it*. Such will be the case if a virtuous man, himself dealing honestly in all things, and therefore unlike many of the men with whom he deals, incurs their hatred and rage; for the honesty and innocence of such a man are to them a Scandal, or occasion of sinning, though an occasion which they accept, and which the virtuous man has not given them. Accordingly, the virtuous man must guard himself against Scandals of the former kind, as he desires to be tempered as much as possible to God and Reason, not only by himself, but also by others; so that he always proceeds with extreme caution, lest other men derive from his actions the opportunity of sinning, honest and good though those actions are. Hence, he often refrains from things that are in other respects within his power, because he sees that they may cause Scandal. On the other hand, the virtuous man should not guard himself against Scandals of the latter kind, which arise merely from the wickedness of those who accept them, but rightly ignore them, having recognised that choosing to guard himself against them would be wholly to abandon Reason and the law of God.

§ 3. *Discretion*

Discretion is the most subtle part of Prudence, and is concerned with how to distinguish between things that on the face of it and in the opinion of the vulgar are either the same or quite closely allied; things between which there is however a very great moral difference, inasmuch as the one may be good and the other bad.

And among such things are found, firstly, *commission* and *permission*; which often seem in the opinion of the vulgar to be of the same character and nature, when they are really very different; for it is often right to permit something that it is not right for anyone to

commit. For example, suppose a tyrant seeks for an innocent man to be delivered up to him by a state; and if he is not delivered up, destruction is threatened. Then, it is not lawful for the state to obey and deliver up the innocent man (for this would be to *commit* evil, and comply with the savagery of the tyrant), though it is still allowable to permit the tyrant's henchmen to arrest the innocent man (for this is only to *permit* the innocent man to be arrested, a state not being required to prevent this at the cost of so much damage and loss of innocent men).

And in the interests of a better understanding of these and similar examples of *discretion*, note that sometimes the same means serves for two ends, one of which is good, and may be intended for its own sake, the other evil, and which one should in no case pursue. For example, to leap from a tower that is ablaze serves for flight from the blaze (and such flight is good, and it is also right to pursue and want it), but it serves also for suicide (and this is evil, and it is not right to pursue it).

Note *secondly*, that a means which thus serves for two ends, often serves for a good end independently of an evil end, that is, it is by nature useful for a good end prior to being useful for an evil end. For example, to leap from the tower in the case cited serves for flight from the blaze rather than suicide; in fact, it serves for flight and it is useful to leap, quite independently of suicide.

Note *thirdly*, that on the other hand such a means sometimes makes for an evil end prior to a good end, or does not serve for the good end independently of the evil end. For example, to stab oneself in the heart serves both for flight from a blaze and for suicide, but the latter prior to the former; in fact, such a means serves for nothing independently of suicide.

It is not right to resort to a means of the last kind; for to resort to it is to commit and positively work evil. For example, in the case cited, to stab oneself in the heart is not only to permit oneself to be slain, but positively to slay oneself, which is in no case right; for nothing in this world is so vile and calamitous that we should not prefer this law of God: *Wait until I summon you*.

But it is right to resort to a means of the second kind out of a just and proportionate pre-existing cause; for this is not to commit, but to permit; and one may permit evil when there is a just cause for not impeding it. Thus, for example, someone who leaps from a tower when it is ablaze, and the blaze begins to touch him, does

not slay himself, but flees from the blaze. Nevertheless, he permits himself to be slain when he is dashed to pieces on the ground below by his own weight.

In this way it is also easily resolved whether one who is put to the question on account of a false accusation could take the guilt upon himself and confess himself a party to the crime in order to spare himself the torment of the question. And it is certain that it is not right; for the means (the confession of a crime) does not serve for a good end (sparing himself torture) independently of the evil end (the death penalty) that a judge will exact on the party who confesses, though innocent.

And again, is it right for the crew of a man-o'-war to blow up the powder magazine in case the ship should fall into the hands of the enemy? In general it is not right; for though such a means may serve for a good end prior to an evil end, that is, keeping the ship out of the hands of the enemy is prior to the death of the crew, it is nevertheless hardly ever the case that a sufficiently grave and proportionate cause is present, for it is not too great a cost for one ship and a certain number of men to fall into the hands of the enemy. Add to which that, even if the enemy happen to be savage, they are still men, and not driven to act with such brutality and with such necessity as are the stones, the street, or the ground that dash to pieces a man leaping from a tower. Hence, some mercy can reasonably be hoped for from them.

Secondly, Discretion is concerned also with matters that sometimes both fall under the law, and are interdicted by Reason, but at other times are left undecided. For example, it is wrong to steal; but in extreme necessity it is not wrong to take whatever is sufficient to alleviate that necessity. Accordingly, someone who in extreme hunger takes a loaf of bread from a baker does not sin, and is not properly speaking a thief; for to steal is to take a thing that belongs to someone else, but in this case it is not a thing belonging to someone else, but a shared thing. For the division of goods among men is not so rigidly enforced, and could not by men be so rigidly enforced, that in extreme necessity all goods might not be regarded as common again, and in just that measure required for the relief of that necessity. But where the necessity of each party is equal, it will not be right to take it; for discretion dictates that in this case the claim of the one who is in possession is the stronger. Thus, in a common shipwreck, it is not right to force off a plank someone who is clinging

to it, so that you who are not in possession of the plank may save yourself.

§ 4. *Ignorance*

Prudence can very well co-exist with a certain degree of ignorance. For although the virtuous man may be wise (as I showed some while ago), he is still ignorant of many things; such as the means by which God framed the world, set him in the world, and will in the fullness of time remove him from the world when it pleases Him. And many other events happen here and there that transcend the boundaries of human understanding, boundaries which the virtuous man has conspicuously in view, and determines never to cross out of exuberance of wit or desire of knowing; for it would be foolish to attempt to do so, and what is more, quite contrary to Reason, which he loves above all things.

Therefore, the virtuous man confines himself within the boundaries with which God has circumscribed him; and has this maxim continually fixed and implanted in his mind: *It is a great part of wisdom to be willing to resign oneself to being ignorant of many things.*

Above all, since the virtuous man is human, there are many things in his particular circumstances and dealings that elude him. *For he is human, and thinks nothing human to be alien from him.**

Prudence excludes only the kind of ignorance that is not compatible with the exclusive love of right Reason, and could have been vanquished and overcome through diligence born of that love.

Hence, *Ignorance* is divided into *vincible* and *invincible Ignorance*. *Vincible Ignorance* is *the kind that could have been dispelled if we had brought due diligence to bear upon it*. Moreover, due diligence is something that is born of Virtue, or love of Reason, and not of anything else. Prudence does not permit such ignorance. For example, suppose that a merchant, presented with an unexpected contract, fails to enquire into it. He sees that profit will flow from it, and does not exert himself any further concerning it; but because he fails to enquire into it he does not know that it is fraudulent. The Ignorance of this merchant

* *Homo ergo est, et nihil humani a se alienum putat*: variation on Terence, *Heautontimorumenos*, 77.

is vincible, and not consistent with Virtue; for if he had had an exclusive love of Reason, he would in the present case have been obliged diligently to examine the possibility of being defrauded or suffering commercial loss. Similarly, the son of a family might be accused of not loving his father if in the dark he were to draw his sword against certain disrespectful and abusive persons, when there might be a suspicion that his father was perhaps to be found in their midst.

Invincible Ignorance is the kind that is not dispelled by the application of due diligence. It is not as if the virtuous man could always apply diligence to dispelling the ignorance that surrounds his action, or a certain circumstance of his action; for he may be ignorant of being ignorant regarding the action. For example, suppose someone (say Seius) has written to a friend (say Caius) asking for help, but because of the negligence of the postman the letter is not delivered, Caius will then labour under invincible ignorance, while nevertheless not having applied any diligence to dispelling his ignorance. However, it can also happen that the virtuous man applies diligence to overcoming ignorance that still remains invincible to him even after diligence has been applied. Thus, if Caius suspects that his friend Seius is in need, he may write to him to this effect, offering help; but if Seius out of shame refuses help, and Caius is unaware of this, Caius may accordingly judge that all is going well with Seius. In this case, Caius will labour under invincible ignorance, even though he has made efforts to remove it. It seems, therefore, that there is a distinction between vincible and invincible in the sense that, when a suspicion occurs, we either examine whether perhaps the action that we have decided to perform is right, and consistent with Reason, or neglect to examine the circumstance around which the suspicion revolves. For if, when the suspicion occurs, we proceed with the work before we have duly considered it, the Ignorance that will remain with us concerning the rightness of the action will be *vincible*, and will not absolve us of sin. For example, suppose that a physician has prescribed a medicine, and that subsequently a suspicion occurs to him arising from certain indications concerning the lack of expertise of the pharmacist, or whoever is to prepare the medicine. If he continues regardless, and sets the matter aside, this Ignorance of the physician regarding the inexpertise of the pharmacist will be accounted vincible. Nor will the physician be free of the stain of homicide if an ill-prepared medicine brings death to a

patient. In fact, even if it does not bring death, even if it is well-prepared, even if the pharmacist is clever, and learned in his profession, a physician who has proceeded in such a way is a party to homicide, because as far as it relates to him it was pure chance that the patient was not killed. But if no suspicion occurs concerning the rightness of the action to be performed, the Ignorance will be invincible, and will absolve one from sin. For example, suppose that in the same case the physician does not have his suspicions aroused, and has no doubts about the competence of the pharmacist. If nevertheless the pharmacist is incompetent, and mixes the patient's medicine badly, as a result of which the patient dies, the physician is free from the guilt of homicide.

Ignorance is divided in another way into Ignorance of *law* and Ignorance of *fact*. *Ignorance of law* is where we are ignorant of a certain law; and this kind of Ignorance is either of *natural law* or of *imposed law*. *Imposed law* does not follow from Reason alone, but from Reason imposed on this or that circumstance; for example, that in a will seven witnesses have to be brought, and other formalities. *Natural law* is what follows from Reason alone; and accordingly does not differ from Reason itself, inasmuch as its conclusions do not differ in reality from the principles from which those conclusions were deduced. Thus, it is natural law that one must not depart this scene without being summoned by God, and other things resulting from the Obligations that I have enumerated elsewhere.

Ignorance of fact is where we are not so much ignorant of law as ignorant that our action is forbidden by law. For example, if the heir of an unjust man were to make use of goods not owned by him, but which are devolved on him by inheritance, he is of course not ignorant that one ought not to steal, but he may not know that his action, in anticipating his inheritance, amounts to theft, and accordingly he labours under ignorance of fact, not of law.

And indeed, Ignorance of fact is often invincible, and absolves of sin, as you can see in the very example that I have just cited. But it is a major difficulty whether Ignorance of natural law could be invincible, and absolve of sin. Many claim this, and adduce various examples, of which this is one: An attendant at a hospital repeatedly turned from side to side patients who were already struggling for breath, declaring that he did so in order to liberate them more quickly from the dread and agony of death; and what was this other

than to kill the patients? Nevertheless, this man appears to have laboured under invincible Ignorance, and should be absolved of sin.

But it seems more accurate to say that no Ignorance of natural law is invincible, that none absolves of sin. As for the above example: a certain Ignorance of fact seems to surround him. Not that the attendant did not know the law that forbids one to kill, but believed that his action is not forbidden by that law. For he believed that his action was not killing, but hastening certain and undoubted death, and was accordingly a lessening of the torment and the agony that must arise in death. For similar reasons, it would seem that we should not reproach a condemned man who, due to be executed, fasts in the meantime, so that death (such as by hanging) may come quickly and easily to his starving body.

The rest is wanting.

ANNOTATIONS TO THE *ETHICS*

To Treatise I. Preface.

1. The *Cardinal Virtues* are those virtues which are a necessary concomitant to every exercise of Virtue, so that no work that is deficient in some of them can be done well and in accordance with Reason. And they are these four: *Diligence* (or listening to Reason), *Obedience* (or following Reason), *Justice* (or proportion to Reason), and finally, *Humility* (or not having a care of oneself). For if a work is to be done well and in accordance with Reason, we must listen to what Reason dictates (for otherwise we would be doing good by accident; but to do good by accident is absolutely to do evil, as will become clear in Treatise VI, On Prudence); we must follow what Reason dictates (for if we do not follow what Reason dictates, but what Passion urges, our work will not be good); we must proportion our work to Reason, that is, do neither more nor less than Reason dictates (for if we do either more or less, we do not follow what Reason dictates); and finally, we must not be led by care of ourselves (for if we have care of ourselves, we do not what Reason dictates but what Self-Love dictates, that is, what love of oneself dictates).

2. Even the Pagans gave due recognition to the first three Cardinal Virtues. For Plato, Aristotle, and others taught plainly enough that one must listen to Reason, do what Reason dictates, and do it exactly (in which points *Diligence*, *Obedience*, and *Justice* are covered). This is well-known. But they were abysmally ignorant of the fourth, or Prince among Cardinal Virtues, namely, *Humility*. The reason for their ignorance was this: that they directed the whole of Ethics and every kind of behaviour towards some utility, either their own, or (displaying more elevated wisdom) of their native country, or even of human society in general. Epicurus was numbered among the former, Aristotle and Plato obviously among the latter; but in this they were very much mistaken. For since Reason, which we love through Virtue, is a *law* that has been given to us in particular and to the human race in general, it is by its very nature not something intended to be of benefit to us, nor does it regard our utility and convenience (for if so it would be a privilege rather than a law). In fact, if Reason,

inasmuch as it is a law that is enjoined on us, looked to our convenience, profit, and benefit, we would be able to renounce it; as it is perfectly well-known by the light of nature that we are at liberty to renounce any right that was brought in for our benefit. In that case, it would not be a *law*; for a *law* to which you are not obliged to conform, and which, when it pleases you, you can dismiss, is no law, but a mere trifle of a law, as is self-evident. But we cannot resile from *laws* that God and Reason have enjoined on us, either as individuals or as the human race in general. They are not, then, things that were brought in for our benefit; and so do not exempt us from Humility, or not having a care of ourselves. Further to this, see the notes on Humility in my Dutch version.*

To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love.

1. What love is, does not need to be stated: the thing itself is perfectly well-known to us through our consciousness and inner life. Since we all of us love on occasion, we cannot be ignorant of the nature of love. And this is true of everything that relates to our thoughts, intellect, and senses, not to mention our will, and the affections of the mind: these are all things that, while perfectly well-known to us through our consciousness, evade definition. There is, however, often a certain ambiguity in a name when the thing itself is perfectly clear. It is then, indeed, that we need to make distinctions and discuss what the name itself signifies. And we certainly need to do so here, for this Ambiguity surrounding the word *Love* is a source of major errors in Ethics. It was principally the vulgar (who by Love mean nothing but a certain kind of affection) who persuaded themselves that the whole nature of virtue consists in some tender and pleasant affection for God and Reason (widely known as *devotion*). Others became persuaded that virtue means some kind of concupiscence; not to mention still other views, as will appear in what follows in the text.

* In two marginal notes to Chapter 2 of *Van de Hooft-Deuchden*, Geulincx elaborates the idea that a law is not made for our benefit, since if it were it would not be a law. Cf. Arnout Geulincx, *Van de Hooft-deuchden: De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667/*Van de Hooft-deuchden: De Eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, ed. J.P.N. Land, Antwerpen – Gent – 's Gravenhage: Buschmann – Hoste – Nyhoff, 1895, 76 and 78–79/Arnout Geulincx, *Van de hoofddeugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 141–142, notes to p. 88.

2. This, by the way, shows us how miserable are those men who are envious of others, revile others, or are given to hating them in some way. They deny themselves what is the most joyful thing in life, *to love*. And there is no difficulty at all in loving everyone, whoever they are, even if we do not approve of their vices. Some have alleged the existence of *antipathies*, that is, natural differences or repugnances, as the Poet says:

*I love thee not, Volusius; why, I cannot say;
I can say this only: I love thee not.**

But these are surely just untenable, over-subtle, fantastic, and imaginative dreams, easily disposed of by the contrary power and usage of right Reason. There is nothing that more becomes a wise man than to be what Aristotle says of himself, a philanthropist, that is, a lover of humanity, averse to no-one, embracing everyone.†

3. *Desire* is nothing other than *love of something absent*; and it therefore contains in itself both tenderness (*love*), and affliction or bitterness (the anguish caused by the absence of the thing loved). *Hope* is nothing other than *love directed towards a future good of which we can be frustrated*; and again therefore it contains tenderness (that is, passionate love) and bitterness (that is, *fear* of being frustrated of that good). And *trust* is nothing other than *great hope*, that is, *great love combined with a little fear*. I do not offer these definitions in order to show what these things are (they are perfectly well-known from consciousness itself, as I noted just now), but, since they affect us partly for good and partly for ill (as our feelings make quite clear), in order to show why they please us, or harm and afflict us, according as they involve respectively love or some other emotion.‡

* Cf. Martial, *Epigrammata* I, 32. Note, however, that Martial mentions Sabidius instead of Volusius. Volusius is the name of an unknown North-Italian poet Catullus ridiculed in Poems 36 and 95.

† Geulincx may be thinking of Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* VIII, 1, in which the term *philanthropos* appears at 155 a 20. Cf. Pseudo-Aristotle, *De virtutibus et vitiis*, Chapter 8.

‡ Geulincx nowhere else offers definitions of the human passions such as we find in the various articles of Descartes' *Les Passions de l'Âme* (1649) and at the end of the third book of Spinoza's *Ethics* (1677). To put this right, his pupil Cornelis Bontekoe wrote a *Treatise on the Passions of Mind and Body* that was published posthumously by Johannes Flenderus in 1696 as *Tractatus Ethico-Physicus de Animi & Corporis Passionibus, Earundemque Certissimis Remediis (Qui necessarium & utilissimum Quarti Tractatus Ethici Geulingiani est supplementum, imò totius Eiusdem Ethicæ Compendium, & quasi Anima)*, Amsterdam: Janssonio-Waesbergii, 1696.

4. From this it is clear that men act mostly in their own interest, and lack true humility, which consists in not having a care of oneself, as was noted in the Preface. In fact, it is clear that they refer all things to themselves insofar as they are men, that is, when they are joined to a body. If they would consider themselves abstracted from the body and the human condition, the pleasure that consists in the bare approbation of their own actions, as mentioned here, would seem to them to be sufficient; but they seek always grosser, sensual pleasure, joined with bodily motion. Passionate love, which cannot be experienced without the motion and agitation of our body, especially the heart, is a pleasure of this kind. We also see from this how, almost by design, they close off from themselves the path to true Humility.

5. When we approve of some action of ours inwardly and in our mind, with our conscience assuring us that it accords with right Reason, that is, the law of God, it often leads to pleasure, or passionate love, of indescribable sweetness. Virtuous men may be so ravished by this passion that they make light of those calamities commonly known as ruin, infamy, the harshness of imprisonment, torments, and a thousand natural shocks, in fact do not seem even to feel them. But sometimes this mental pleasure is not accompanied by bodily pleasure, which consists wholly in some passion or other; for passion depends on the constitution of our body, and may have a mental cause that on account of the incapacity of the body does not pass into our body itself. On the other hand, passion may have no mental cause, but nevertheless pass into our body on account of the capacity of the body: in this case we feel pleasure without any underlying cause of pleasure.

6. Passionate love, that is, affective love, is beyond the scope of morality. It is neither good nor bad within the criteria of morality, nor is it necessarily vicious, but rather a thing indifferent, or *adiaphorous*, just as seeing, hearing, and similar things, are natural, not moral. For our sensations and passions arise from the same cause, and differ from each other only through some external relation (for we customarily ascribe our sensations to external objects, but not our passions). This will be explained at greater length later on, in Treatise IV, which deals explicitly with Passions.

7. The whole meaning and nature of Virtue can be compressed into these few words: *Virtue is the intention of doing what Reason dictates.* Whether this intention is joined with, or lacks tenderness (passion-

ate love), is of no consequence for the nature of Virtue; he is the most virtuous who has this intention, even if he is bereft of all those feelings of which passionate love consists. And, as we noted a little earlier, he can be bereft of them on account of the disposition of a body less able to perceive the sweetness and tenderness of which passionate love consists. Hence, those who are gravely ill, and on the point of death, even if they are the most virtuous of men, even if they harbour the firmest intention of obeying God and coming to Him who is calling them forth from among the living, may nevertheless lack the pleasures and tenderness of mind by which they were wont to be ravished when they were sound of body: a thing that is nevertheless no impediment to their virtue.

8. It should, however, be obvious whom it refers to; for we are not said to love anyone just because we are inclined towards him with a firm intention. Love must be understood to be a firm intention in respect of an end-for-which (and Treatise III will deal with the *end-for-which* and *end-of-which*). Thus, if someone has a firm intention of slaying his enemy, he will with that intention be said to love not his enemy but himself (who is here the *end-for-which*). Thus also, if someone has a firm intention of devoutly following God's law, in order that he may thereby earn eternal blessedness, that very intention (as it is always and everywhere) is love, but love of himself, since he himself, the one who firmly intends it, is in that case the *end-for-which*. But if someone has a firm intention of devoutly following God's law, that is, doing what Reason dictates, simply because Reason dictates it, then by sticking to this, and not expanding his intention beyond it, he loves Reason and God's law, and, as much as it is within his power, God Himself; not because God, His law, or Reason are in this case the *end-for-which* in the proper sense (for nothing is thereby stored up for us, or accounted to us when we act virtuously, nothing is taken away from us when we act viciously), but because they are the *end-for-which of Obedience*, which here is sufficient for them to be *said* to be loved, since no other kind of love could have them as its object. All this will be explained at greater length later on, in Treatise III.

9. Just as both medicine and a man are said to be *healthy*, though a man in the proper sense, and medicine in an improper sense and by a figure of speech, namely, in that it is a cause of health:—so also both a passion (namely, the pleasant, tender and sweet kind) and a firm intention of following something, are called *love*; the

intention in the proper sense, but the passion by a similar figure of speech, because it is often the cause of the love properly so called, which is brought to perfection in the intention. For all men know of those whom they began by loving out of passion or with Affective Love, and whom they eventually came to love with Effective Love, and to care for and favour. In this way, Affective Love often generates Effective Love, as we shall see a little later in paragraph 5.

10. There are certain dainty folk, who are always ready to attach themselves to others in a flattering manner, and are even possessed of a certain sympathy, but who, when the attachment becomes too onerous, fail to give support. In these people Affective Love is barren, and does not generate Effective Love. Such men should not be held in high regard, for though they have within themselves the seed of true love, it does not germinate. Affective Love is like a seed that has only this one use, that is, to beget Effective Love. Otherwise it is in itself quite useless. Therefore, when we need real help, such men should be kept at a distance along with women and children. When we run into danger, they hinder rather than help us with their tears and solicitude.

11. The vulgar have recognised instinctively (what is certainly true, but about which, however, the Scholastics were grievously at fault, as I shall explain in § 3 of this Chapter) that virtue is *love*; but since they understand by the name of *love* only a certain sensation or passion (for as far as the vulgar are concerned, they are wholly given over to their sensations), they refer even virtue itself to sensation or passion; especially to what they call *devotion*, that is, that tender feeling for God and His Law which they find so attractive.

12. Affective Love as we previously noted, depends on bodily constitution; so that a body less well constituted to receiving Affective Love may lack that love and its pleasures, even though its cause is present in the mind. In other words, virtue may be without devotion because the body is not easily affected by devotion.

13. For if they are truly humble they will easily earn the reward of humility, namely, secure peace, or a consciousness pacified and tranquil, and free from all passions and perturbations. Concerning this reward, see below, in Treatise V. Moreover, if they are truly humble they will not covet their rewards; it will be enough for them to have attuned themselves to Divine Law. Concerning this, see also below, in the Section on the Adminicle of Humility, especially paragraph 4. And for the very reason that they do not covet peace, but

rather the law of God, I contend that amidst the perturbations and anxieties of consciousness they have attained peace and tranquillity.

14. Not surprisingly; for what could persuade you to expel it, if not self-love, or love of yourself, in order, of course, that you may free yourself from those worries, and regain security and well-being. But this intention is far removed from the intention in which the nature of virtue consists, an intention that has nothing in view but the law of God, one's office, and one's obligation. Thus, you will not regain your erstwhile security; for it gets lost in the quest, and is one of those things that have a will of their own, and come to one only of their own accord (see this Treatise on the Adminicle of Humility, paragraph 4). Otherwise, you will be entangled day after day in major anxieties and scruples, from which you can escape only by overcoming, and as it were burying this love of tranquillity with new desires and sins, all of which is the true and horrible cost of self-love.

15. That is, men are wont to give precedence to their passions over their actions, and speak and act as they are so moved. This indeed is quite perverse (in fact, in the propensity of mind that we all feel within us to accommodate action to our affections lies the whole origin of sin, as is shown below, in Treatise IV). The proper thing is to give precedence to our actions, and to consider whichever passions or affections are attached as right and good, as our lot*, and as a not insignificant part of the human condition that God has imposed on us. If they affect you pleasantly, give thanks to God (for which, see below in Treatise II on Piety); if not so pleasantly, bear with patience what has to be borne in any case. This will be more clearly explained in Treatise IV below.

16. This is manly: not to allow oneself to become preoccupied with one's own passions, that is, never to grant them the right to dictate or inhibit any action of ours, but to cede that right wholly to Reason. For Reason alone has the vision, Reason alone has the capacity to guide our actions; and not our blind passions.

17. Be cautious; for there is no necessity for a certain flower always to bloom from the same stock. This is often inhibited by the state of health of the body and its capacity for feeling, on account

* The Latin word here is *pensum*, a word which Beckett uses frequently in *The Unnamable*.

of which it does not always produce that pleasant feeling, as I have already pointed out several times.*

18. Hence, *benevolent love*, or beneficence towards God, must always be impious and improper. For since the person of a patron is more dignified than the person of a client, and one who shares out benefits is more dignified than one who receives and shares in them, we cannot desire to confer any benefit on God without thereby raising ourselves up, setting ourselves above Him in that respect at least, and desiring to be more dignified than He (all of which will become clearer below in Treatise III, when we come to speak of the Beneficent End). We should, therefore, take extreme care to avoid that false zeal with which so many pious persons are deluded into thinking that they may obtain glory for God and honour from men in proportion to the benefits that they have bestowed on God. Our highest love, our highest office and service to God, have their beginning and their end in our obedience to His law. Whatever else we may do, we serve Him whether we will it or not (as you can see here in § 2, paragraph 1).

19. Although our benevolent love cannot be squared with God and Reason, as I have now shown, this is not true of approbative, consensual, and acquiescent love. By this I mean that when we praise the nature of God and His attributes, we thereby praise the law and Reason that He has implanted in us. But this love is not formally addressed to Virtue; for *Virtue* is addressed by some office and action, which are enjoined on us by God's law. Accordingly, virtue is a kind of love that precedes action, while *approbation* is a kind of love that is consequent on the approved action. With virtue we love what is to be done; with approbation we love what has been done.

As I remarked, *approbation can be squared with God and Reason*. However, it seems on careful consideration of the matter that I should withdraw what I said here concerning approbative love of God, as it does not seem that we can have any such love of God. For what is approved must be subjected to some proof, some rule, some measure, and can only be approved when, as a result of an examination (which consists in its being so subjected), it is found to square with the proof, the rule, the measure. For example, we may examine with a ruler lines drawn with a pen, to check whether they are

* See above, Annotations 5 and 7.

straight; or compare a picture with its living subject to see whether it is a true likeness. We compare everything with its idea, and according as it falls short of it or meets it, we approve or disapprove, as the case may be. Nothing similar has a place with God; He cannot be subject to any rule, He who is Himself the supreme rule, nor is He dependent on any idea of Himself that (like other ideas) He communicates to us, but on the contrary, this idea depends on Him. Accordingly, there is nothing to which we may refer God, nothing to which we may compare His nature and essence in order that we may legitimately establish our approbation of them. If those who give approbation analyse themselves in depth, they will see that for the most part they have compared God with something else, something that seems to them to be graceful, beautiful, and excellent, and have approved it because they reckon that it suits their fancy; a kind of approbation that is without doubt a sin. Hence all those portents of the gods found in pagan writers, superstitious and fanatical men who compare God to, and make Him conform with any old fancy of their brain, and approve of the same. Therefore, *obedience* alone remains to us as the only kind of subservient love by which, each in his own little fashion, we can lawfully be moved towards God, and should continually be moved.

20. This is evident, for our actions are as it were a mirror of Reason and God's law. If they reflect Reason, and contain in themselves what Reason dictates, then they are virtuous and praiseworthy; but if they distort Reason's reflection in themselves, then they are vicious and blameworthy. This has no effect on Reason, or God's law, which are no more beautiful or more ugly for it. Likewise, a thing represented in a mirror remains the same whether the mirror is true and faithfully represents it, or whether it is false and twists and distorts the likeness of the thing. The mirror does not distort the likeness of the thing reflected in the thing itself, but in itself, that is, in the mirror itself. Hence, corruption and ugliness belong with the mirror itself, not with the thing reflected. Similarly, we are also said to break God's law, to trample on it, to pervert it, and so on, but this takes place in ourselves, not in the law itself, so that the whole of the ugliness remains in ourselves, and nothing of it belongs with the law itself.

21. I said in paragraph 2 that, while love is always a firm intention, it does not signify anything affected by that firm intention, but rather an *End-for-which*. It is the same with concupiscent love, which,

since it is an intention, can in the proper sense signify only an *End-for-which*. Since men who love riches, honours, and so on, want these things for their own sake, they may in the proper sense be said to love themselves, as they are the *Ends-for-which* of this love or intention of theirs. But this is something in which men do not observe the rules of signification. When they wish to obtain riches and honours for themselves they do not say that they love themselves, but that they love riches, honours, and so on. If they wished to obtain them for others, they would say explicitly that they love those others. From this it is plain that they cloak their concupiscent love in a mantle, and convey and dissimulate it under cover. For they see that it sounds bad, and quite unpleasant, if someone says that he loves himself; therefore, by this abuse of language, and an oblique way of speaking about concupiscent love and benevolent love, they give sufficient testimony that they realise there is something disgraceful about concupiscent love. And with good reason: for concupiscent love is sin in its very own self, as will become more apparent in what follows.

22. Namely, Treatise VI, in the subsection on Antipathy, or the natural difference between virtuous men and vicious men.*

23. The root of Ethics is humility, to withdraw from oneself, to be subject to no care or regard of oneself; but the end and fruit of Ethics is the law and Obligation by which we are in some way held fast to Reason and God. For it is impossible for anyone to attain the fruit of Ethics, that is, God and His law, who has not already abandoned himself; for law and obligation in general never envisage any reward for the one who is obligated (as I noted in the Preface to this Treatise, and about which more will be said later). Therefore, neither the rewards of virtue nor the penalties of sin are the direct concern of Ethics. Ethics achieves its goal when it has clearly indicated what we should or should not do; what results from that does not concern Ethics. But the virtuous man knows his rewards, and understands perfectly (as we ourselves understand) that God will sooner cease to be than not reward His virtuous subjects. Nevertheless, the virtuous man does nothing and refrains from doing nothing on account of such rewards; Divine Law is enough for him.

* This Annotation is a mysterious one. The subsection on Antipathy occurs in Treatise V instead of Treatise VI, nor does it deal with the topic of self-love. The note, however, occurs in a similar way in all seventeenth-century editions and has accordingly been preserved here.

24. It is not as if he is guilty of every crime and *omission*, but because he is of criminal stock, and avoids wrongdoing only by good fortune and circumstance. This does not redound to his credit, but must be ascribed to good luck (as we like to say). Left to himself, he might just as easily erupt into some outrageous act as into some probably harmless little piece of mendacity. For he departs from Reason, he has broken his Ariadne's thread; it is sheer good fortune if he does not meet his Minotaur and be devoured; and he can take no credit for sheer good fortune.

25. By *virtue*, therefore, we mean *to love Reason*, the law of God, and in a certain sense, God Himself. This is the end-for-which of the intention that constitutes virtue; though not a benevolent or approbative end-for-which, as I noted above in paragraph 6, but an *obedient* end. And we can to some extent even among men love someone with obedient love, while not loving him with benevolent love. For example, we may choose to obey a magistrate, even though we wish him neither well nor ill, and want only to secure a reward for ourselves or avoid a penalty. In this way, therefore, we might be able to love even Reason with obedient love, while not being attracted to it by benevolent love. But when we thus love the magistrate with obedient love, we love ourselves with concupiscent love, and it is not right to behave similarly towards Reason. For when we love Reason with obedient love, it is impossible for us to love ourselves with concupiscent love, since it is the highest law of Virtue to abandon oneself, not to love oneself.

The argument of § 1

Love has two divisions: pleasant love, and effective love.

Pleasant love also has two divisions: sensible or corporeal love (which is passionate love, or affective love), and spiritual love (which is a certain kind of approbation; and pre-eminent here is that approbation with which we approve of our actions when they conform with Reason, that is, the highest law). Corporeal love comes from men indiscriminately and at a high price, while spiritual love can be had for almost nothing; for men are in bondage to their sensations. These matters are for the most part covered in paragraph 1.

Neither kind of love (that is, neither pleasant love nor effective love) constitutes Virtue. For Virtue can exist with or without the former; without the latter Virtue indeed cannot exist, but is prior to it. These matters are covered in paragraph 2.

Effective love is a firm intention, signifying an end-for-which. It is often generated by affective love (which happens in vice, and in particular in intemperance). Sometimes it generates affective love (which is often the case in the exercise of virtue), sometimes the latter is without the former, and sometimes the former is without the latter. These matters are covered in paragraph 5.

Effective love is either benevolent love (which does not make for virtue, as we cannot do anything either good or bad for Reason), concupiscent love (and this makes for virtue even less, as with concupiscent love we love ourselves, not Reason), or obedient love (and this at last constitutes virtue, for no other love is consistent with Reason). These matters are covered in paragraphs 6, 7, and 8.

We must in passing also note an error of the vulgar. Being given over to their sensations, they place virtue in affective love, that is, in a certain passion, and so, when they lack that passion, suffer great distress. These matters are covered in paragraphs 3 and 4.

To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason.

1. And therefore what it is must not be said; for to say what something is, is to make it clear; but what is already sufficiently known and clear must not be clarified any further.

2. Reason is so clear to us because it is something of ours, which we carry around with us all the time, and which we can look at whenever we are so minded; just as, for a similar reason, it was stated near the beginning of § 1 that what *love* is must not be said. The reason is the same in both cases, and when the Scholastics wanted to illuminate such matters with logical definitions they achieved nothing other than appearing to want to render them obscure to themselves and to others, as if by design.

3. It is clear to all men that the summation of Ethics is contained in this saying: *wherein you have no power, therein you should not will*,* or in other words, *do nothing in vain*, which is the origin of Ethics, in fact even the supreme principle of Ethics, from which you can easily deduce every single one of the obligations that make up the scope of Ethics, and which I shall deal with below. For if we should do nothing *in vain*, then we should not resist when God summons us,

* *Ubi nihil valet, ibi nihil velis*: Geulincx' so-called 'axiom of morals'. Beckett makes use of this formulation from Geulincx on a number of occasions. See Uhlmann's introduction for further details.

and releases us from the human condition, that is, announces our death; and this is the *first obligation*. If we should do nothing *in vain*, then we should not resist when God commands us to go on living, and continues to subject us to the human condition; and this is the *second obligation*. And if the latter is the case, then we must earn a living; and this is the *third obligation*. And if this is the case, then we must perform some function, and so on. Since, then, the principle of all these things is so clear to us, we should not state so categorically that their principle is hidden from us; even though on occasion it may be hidden from us in other moral matters. For example, if we happen to be standing atop a tower when it catches fire, should we jump off or stay where we are? Here indeed, the principle is hidden from anyone *uninstructed in Ethics* (for we impute the fact that a blind man does not see to his blindness, not to the brightness of the Sun). But it does not follow that the principle is hidden; for what is clear somewhere, but concealed and obscure somewhere else, is absolutely clear, and obscure only in a secondary sense.

4. In all these cases, the son of the family is said absolutely *to know* his father, but not *to recognise* him. For there is a world of difference between *to know* and *to recognise*. We know many things that we do not immediately recognise; and in this instance the son of the family indeed knows his father, but does not recognise him in his disguise. Thus, even the uneducated know the principle of Ethics, but do not recognise it in (for example) such circumstances as these: when a tower is ablaze and someone is caught on its top, should he jump off or remain where he is? For in these and like circumstances, the principle is in some manner disguised and veiled from them, but if the veil is withdrawn by sound Ethics, they not only know it but also agree with me in recognising the principle hidden behind the veil. And here, by the way, emerges a conspicuous contrast between knowledge and love. For what you know sometimes, at other times not, you know absolutely; but what you love sometimes, at other times not, you do not love absolutely. Hence, if someone loves his friend in the manner of these well-known verses:

*In sunshine days, your friends will abound,
When clouds roll in, they're no longer around,**

* See above, 143, footnote.

it is clear that he loves not his friend but his friend's fortune. Similarly, someone who at one time loves Reason (for instance, when he has to be thrifty), but at another time does not (for instance, when he has to spend money), does not love Reason, but loves at most a certain mode and circumstance of Reason. From this, by the way, it is also now clear how just is that paradox of the Stoics: *Whoever has one virtue, has them all*; that is, it is not possible to love Reason sometimes, at other times not: whoever does not love it sometimes, never loves it.

5. This explains why I said that Virtue is *love of Reason*, rather than *love of God*. Of course, Christians say continually in their Churches that Virtue is love of God; and they speak the truth, for Virtue is in a certain sense love of God rather than love of His law. Just as someone who loves the command of a Prince (that is, wishes to obey him) loves that command which was conceived in the mind of the Prince rather than what is engraved on a tablet; so, all virtuous men cultivate, and are diligent in obeying God's law, or Reason, as it was conceived by God, rather than as it emanates from Him and was engraved in our mind as on a tablet. And indeed, that law, that Reason, that decree in the divine mind of what is to be our obligation is God His very own self. It is on this pious understanding that Christians rightly say that Virtue is rather love of God than love of His law. But absolutely according to the letter, speaking with exact Scholastic and Philosophical care, we must say that, for all the obedient love in which its nature is perfected, Virtue does not extend as far as God, but stops short of that most excellent and sublime Being before our love can touch Him, and halts and terminates in His law, or Reason; which is conclusively proved by the arguments set out in the text.

6. We obey God in our own fashion and on our own understanding. By this I mean the understanding on which we consider Him our lawgiver, one who conceives within Himself the Reason that He inscribes and impresses upon us; so that the intention of obeying Him in this way is neither vain or vicious, but on the contrary contains within itself the whole nature of Virtue (as I noted a little earlier). But an intention of obeying God in Himself, and absolutely as He is in Himself, and apart from any such understanding, is inept, vain, and ridiculous, and even, when we thoroughly analyse it, impious; for it clearly presupposes that God is

worthy of our bounty, and is a God whom we can do a favour, that is, a God inferior to us in some respects. For you want to do what He wants, while believing yourself able to do what He does not want; and what is this other than to have persuaded yourself that you are capable of deserving of Him good or ill?

7. Elsewhere this is a strange saying; here it is truth. For those who do something already done are said to act in vain, because it is in vain to do what has been done; and *when the end is done with, the means are done with too* (as the dictum of the Scholastics has it). But in this case, to want to obey God absolutely is, in the proper sense of the word, and without speaking metaphorically or in parables, to want to do what is already done. For God and nature decree, and have decreed with a fateful necessity, that all things must be subject to the divine will. If you then want to subject something to Him, what is this other than to want to do what is already done? What is this other than to want to provide a circle with an area? Something that it would have whether you want it or not.

8. Even though God may will acts that we ourselves cannot perform without sin and shame, He is still not the author of sin, but the author of nature. For He does not will them as shameful, or as deviating from the rules that He has prescribed, but as natural things, in which, as such, there is nothing bad. Just as, therefore, an ell-yard (the instrument, I mean, with which merchants measure cloth) has length, and needs length in order that it may be what it is called, namely, *an ell-yard*, but does not take into account its width and thickness (though it is impossible that what has length should not equally have width and thickness, as I demonstrate in my *Metaphysics*),* and insofar as it is an ell-yard, in measuring cloth takes into account only length (for what do the width or thickness have to do with measuring cloth?); so also God, insofar as He prescribes Reason to us, and the order of doing things, in fact, insofar as He is that very Reason and order, inwardly rejects and repudiates those acts of ours which involve sin and departure from the rules and governing principles laid down for us. But absolutely, and insofar as He is the

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 2, "Octava Scientia", in *Opera* II, 171–174/*Metaphysics*, 65–71.

author of nature, He wills those acts (for they would not happen if He did not will them). Thus, there is nothing bad about those acts.

We can never resolve the question of ineffability by means of such analogies. For every genuine reconciliation presupposes an understanding of both terms: the *power* of God has to be reconciled with His *goodness*. The *power*, by which He does all things, that is, all genuine things, in such a way that nothing untoward occurs, still less anything against His will; and the *goodness*, by which He does not desire sin, but rightly condemns it in us, and punishes it. But we see quite clearly that we shall never have the ability to understand both terms of the proposed reconciliation (that is, divine *goodness* and *power*); and accordingly, with our finite intellect we can have no hope of effecting such a reconciliation. This craving of human ingenuity to reconcile things that exceed its understanding involves no small measure of impiety, because it clearly verges on judging God to be in the end comprehensible by us (and that is as much to say that we are equal to Him). Moreover, with every reconciliation discovered by our intellect, His ineffability is taken away (because it turns wholly on the fact that we know that He acts, but how He acts we do not know); and with His ineffability diminished, His adorability (which presupposes ineffability as a necessary precondition, as is clearly shown later, in Treatise II, in the subsections on Piety and Religion) is also taken away, and with it all religion and divine worship. Therefore, once we have rid ourselves of this craving for reconciliations, it should be enough for us to distinguish each term of the reconciliation clearly and distinctly, as it touches on the case in question, understanding quite clearly that nothing happens unless God directly wills it to happen (which is one term), and that, on the other hand, He blames us for our sins, and punishes them severely (which is the other term).

9. Just as a ship carrying a passenger with all speed towards the west in no way prevents the passenger from walking towards the east, so the will of God, carrying all things, impelling all things with inexorable force, in no way prevents us from resisting His will (as much as is in our power) with complete freedom. The difficulty here lies in our lack of practice in thinking about a thing, rather than in the thing itself, so by familiarising ourselves with these and other analogies, we shall at length be able to perceive the thing itself as well as if we had always been familiar with it (for this is the purpose of analogies, which serve and conduce to no other end).

10. Accordingly, the intention of wanting to obey Him according as He is in Himself is vain; vain also is obedient love towards Him considered as He is in Himself. But approbative love¹ is not vain, as it differs greatly from obedient love. *Approbation* is concerned with the agreement of an effect with the divine will as already established; while *obedience* is concerned with the same agreement *as it should be established* and procured by us. For example, suppose that a storm blows up. This effect agrees with the divine will (for a storm could not blow up unless God had willed it to blow up); I approve of this agreement: it is now therefore established. But it is clear that probably only someone possessed by stupidity or misplaced zeal would believe that the occurrence of a storm entails the greater glory of God, and therefore vainly call for it, and apply other means to make it happen. Here we observe a congruence of the storm with the divine will, and it is indeed loved (albeit with a misplaced love), but as something to be established, and not as something already established; and so such love is obedient.

11. Moral and Ethical matters presuppose natural and Physical matters; for the concept of the human condition is Physical, and without knowledge of Physics nothing can be stated either truly or falsely of moral matters, as the whole of Ethics and all obligations are derived from inspection of oneself. It follows from this that Ethics, more than any other science, is exceedingly liable to errors; for it has not only *its own* sewers, through which errors flow up into it (I mean our desires and lusts; for most men speak as they feel, and say that the things which have to be done are those towards which they feel themselves inclined), but also *alien* ones, through which, with no less harm, it is contaminated (by which I mean prejudices, and ignorance of Physical things and of the human condition), almost all other sciences having only their own sewers through which to be polluted.

12. The *exclusive* love of Reason is love of Reason, and Reason alone. And we can prove Virtue to be exclusive love of Reason as much from the notion of *love* as from the notion of *Reason*. From the notion of *love*, because you can truly love only one thing, for

¹ For approbation we could substitute the assent by which we agree with those propositions in which we invoke attributes of God and hold them as truths. But such assent hardly seems to deserve the name of love, as it involves no moral goodness or evil (which necessarily follow from love), but only truth or falsity.

nothing can be loved in the proper sense except as an end-for-which. This end is either one or many; if one, then that is all there is to it, and one thing only is loved; if many, then the many are either divided or united. If united, they immediately constitute a single end; if individual, they come in some order, and only the one coming last is in the proper sense an end, and properly loved (which will emerge more fully in Treatise III, On the End). Since, therefore, virtue is love of Reason, and it is possible to love only one thing at the same time, this love must be of Reason alone. The same can also be proved from the notion of *Reason*. Suppose, if possible, that there could be love of two things at the same time; then it could still not be love of Reason and some other thing. For Reason, owing to its special nature and essential condition, does not suffer itself to be loved together with another thing, but when loved requires all the love for itself alone. As soon as Reason has begun to be loved, it dismisses the love with which the lover loves himself; showing him clearly (what we shall learn by inspection of ourselves) that he can do nothing, and that he has no power, neither over his being born, nor over his living or dying; showing him clearly that wherein he has no power, therein he should not will, therein he should not attempt anything (and how much clearer can this maxim be?). If, therefore, he loves Reason when it states this maxim, that is, he wants to obey it, he must put away from himself all care and study of himself, that is, disavow all love of himself. Thus you see how Reason will not suffer itself to be loved at the same time as the self-same one who loves it; how much less will it suffer itself to be loved together with some third thing? Add to which (something that will become quite clear from what follows) that there are only two loves, namely, love of God (Reason) and self-love.* Since love of God precludes self-love, it also precludes any other love.

The argument of § 2

What Reason is, is sufficiently known because of the fact that it is known at some point. These matters are covered in paragraph 1.

Virtue is rather love of Reason than love of God; for our love—and I mean obedient love, of which alone we here speak—is superfluous when addressed to God Himself, who must be obeyed

* See above, 107.

whether we will or not. Approbative love, however, is not beside the point here, as I said in the Annotations. These matters are covered in paragraph 2.

Redundant to the definition of Virtue are these two qualifications placed in front of § 1: *Exclusive* and *Right*, of which the former is attached to the genus, and the latter to the difference. For these qualifications are already there by nature: love of Reason cannot be other than exclusive, as is proved from the notion of love as well as the notion of Reason; concerning which see the Annotations. These matters are covered in paragraph 4.

The qualification *Right* is likewise redundant, for right Reason and Reason are the same thing. True, or right, is a property of being, which (as the Scholastics say) informs every being, and excludes none. These matters are covered in paragraph 3.

To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition.

1. *Disposition*, or *disposability*, has two senses, custom and facility; the latter as effect, the former as cause; so that disposition is nothing other than *facility engendered by custom*. Custom alone is not disposition; for custom that does not engender facility is not disposition. A projectile fired high into the air does not acquire a disposition to ascend, as this custom of ascent does not engender in the projectile a facility to ascend. For its part, facility does not suffice on its own for disposition. A sphere rotates and rolls about on a plane in a facile manner, but no disposition is observable in the sphere, because this facility depends not on custom but on the nature of a certain shape.

2. Since disposition has only these two parts (I mean, *custom* and *facility*), it is obvious that neither of them is a constituent of the nature of Virtue; for to do something easily is not necessarily to do good, nor is *to be accustomed* to do something necessarily to do good, as is self-evident. And what further proof do we need that the nature of Virtue is not derived from disposition?

3. For if they do not come from Virtue (that is, from an intention of doing what Reason, or divine law, dictates), they come either from no intention at all or from another intention. If from no intention, then they are not moral, but natural actions, such as we often perform through inadvertence or distraction (for example, when we chew our fingernails or a pencil while thinking or studying hard), actions that consequently are neither good nor bad so far as morals

are concerned. But if they arise from an intention other than that of obeying God's law and Reason, then they are not virtuous but vicious actions; for *whatever happens other than out of a right end is, by the fact that the end is not right, a sin*. Thus, in order to tend to sin, an action need not arise from a bad end; it is enough for it not to arise from a good end.

4. To this Aristotelian argument that I have just cited (namely, placing Virtue in disposition, under which even sleeping men who are capable of being disposed to Virtue may be called virtuous, even though there is mostly no act) I reply that: denomination can also arise out of a formal cause that is absent. The formal cause of denomination is that from which the denomination is taken; so that the formal cause of something *white* is *whiteness*, things being called white on account of their whiteness. Thus, even something absent may lend its name to such a cause; as when someone is called a mayor from having served as a mayor, as the Dutch saying has it: *Once a mayor, always a mayor*. Similarly, a man may be called *rich* on account of riches that are not actually in his possession, as in the example in the text; similarly also, he could be called *virtuous* on account of his virtuousness (that is, from an intention of doing what Reason dictates) even though, during sleep or when his thoughts have been distracted by something else, virtuousness, that is, the said intention, is absent. And in general this whole objection is about names, something from which sound argument can never flow, as names and their meanings depend merely on human convention, and are not part of the nature of the thing denominated.

5. Thus also today we customarily call a wall of a house white on account of the fact that their inner sides are usually whitewashed, in order to reflect light into our rooms and to make it easier to clean off the dust and dirt that stick to them. Hence, they are called white because they are normally white. Nevertheless, they are not called white out of that usage or custom (however much it may be required to the denomination of white), but from the whiteness that adheres to them. Thus, the custom is a precondition of that denomination (for if the inner walls of our houses were painted promiscuously in any old colour, they would no longer be called white rather than some other colour), but the formal cause of the denomination is whiteness itself. It is from this and on this account that they are called white.

6. Similarly, a custom of doing good is indeed a condition of being popularly known as virtuous; but it by no means follows from this that the custom is also the formal cause of that denomination, and that it is virtue itself. This completely destroys the Aristotelian argument; for there is a wide difference between a formal cause and a precondition of denomination, as can be proved from the example just cited, and from an infinite number of similar examples if need be. When I am in Leiden, it is a precondition or a requirement of my being in The Hague that I depart from Leiden, but it is not the formal cause; for I am not said to be present in The Hague on account of my departure (though my departure is required for me to be in The Hague), I am said to be in The Hague on account of my presence there. Finally, if *custom* could be the formal cause of the denomination of being virtuous (which is impossible), what must you say concerning *facility*? For *disposition* speaks not only of *custom*, but of *facility*, as we noted at the beginning of this § 3; and on what showing can it be said that a facility of acting is virtue? Virtuous men may often labour and sweat blood under an office of Virtue.

7. Here also is the refutation of what I conceded for the sake of argument, namely that a custom of acting rightly, even though it is not the formal cause, is still a precondition of being called virtuous. I have shown that it is not in fact a precondition. Someone can be absolutely virtuous without any such precondition, that is, without a custom of doing good; if, for example, on the spur of the moment he conceives in his mind a firm intention of doing only what Reason dictates. Such a one may not seem virtuous to the vulgar, but he nevertheless is virtuous, and he absolutely deserves the name. This is supported by the sacraments of Christians, who do not hesitate to assert that if a man on the point of death has such an intention, then even though he was once guilty of the most heinous crimes, he will partake of eternal bliss.

8. When we do something that falls under the heading of morals, we act either out of passion or out of Reason, that is, either Reason advises us on the doing of it, or Passion. Accordingly, when it is Passion, we sin; when it is Reason, we act virtuously and well. These matters are explained in Treatise IV, On the Passions.

9. That is, whatever arises out of them, arises out of Passion. For familiarity, or love of the commonplace, and fear of what is not commonplace, are passions by which the greater part of the vulgar

are continually moved, as I shall show convincingly below in Treatise IV, in the Section On the Life of the Vulgar. Therefore, every action that proceeds from Virtue as conceived in Aristotelian terms is pure sin, since to act out of passion is to sin; which is well recognised in the Christian Church, where the faithful among the vulgar are often warned against approaching the practice of Christian Piety out of habit, as is stated here in the text.

10. As it has now been conclusively demonstrated, and proved with clear and simple arguments which no-one can fail to understand, that Virtue does not consist in disposition, it must come as a source of wonder to anyone how the Aristotelians could have brought themselves to believe that Virtue does consist in disposition. I reply that this question is addressed in paragraph 2, where it says that they were deceived by the denomination of this word *virtuous* into taking what is a precondition of denomination to be its formal cause, as if mistaking a cloud for Juno.* But if we consider their error in a more subtle manner, we shall see that it is completely refuted by what is said in paragraph 4, to the effect that they failed to distinguish adequately between facility and love; so that it seemed to them, as it also seems to the vulgar, that whatever happens with facility must happen with love; in which they are gravely in error, as this paragraph shows.²

² This error seems to have overcome them by degrees: *first*, they saw that virtuous men act with love, or with a great and firm intention (for virtue is love, and just such an intention); *secondly*, on account of analogy and similitude (which are perhaps the single greatest cause of our errors, as we observed in our Commentary on Descartes' *Principles*[†]) they confused love with facility, in consequence of which virtuous men seemed to them to act with facility, and virtue seemed to be facility; and *lastly*, since they saw that we acquire facility (of the corporeal and sensible kind) for the most part by repeated actions (in which two ideas the whole nature of disposition consists), and nothing remained to those led into this impasse through error but to place virtue in disposition.

* *Pro Iunone nubem*: according to an old myth, Ixion was punished for coupling with an image of Juno that Jupiter had formed from a cloud.

† Cf. *Annotata Latiora in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes*, esp. the annotations to *Principia* I, 70 and 71, where Geulincx argues that the root of all epistemological and moral error lies in an original propensity to take *species* for ideas; *Opera* III, 410 ff.

The Argument of § 3

Virtue must not be placed in disposition. First, because while virtue is prior to virtuous actions, disposition is posterior to them; secondly, because while virtue belongs with morals, disposition belongs with nature. These matters are covered in paragraph 1.

Thirdly, because while virtue can be acquired all at once, disposition can be acquired only gradually and through repeated acts. Fourthly (an argument from authority), because this is how all Christians in their Churches regard it. These matters are covered in paragraph 3.

The objection is made that even men who are asleep, in whom there is no intention such as that in which we have placed virtue, but only a disposition to act well, are also virtuous. I reply that in such men there is an intention of acting well, or at least morally, which is enough to justify this denomination. The objection is made, secondly, that such a disposition is necessary for a man to be called virtuous. I reply that the assumption is false, as paragraph 3 makes clear; and that as far as there is any truth in it at all, it follows at most that disposition is a precondition of being called virtuous, and not its formal cause. These matters are covered in paragraph 2.

Finally, a distinction is made between love and disposition, the confusion of which seems to have been the root of the Aristotelians' error. These matters are covered in paragraph 4.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. On the Cardinal Virtues.

1. I exclude from these the essential rewards of virtue, such as *wisdom*, *learning*, *freedom*, *satisfaction*, and even *happiness* itself (with which I shall deal partly in this Treatise, partly in a separate Treatise, On the Reward of Virtue). For those rewards do not derive immediately from the nature of virtue but from other intermediate properties that are prior to them by nature. Thus, *wisdom* and *learning* flow from virtue through the mediation of diligence; *freedom* through the mediation of obedience; *satisfaction* through the mediation of justice; and both *happiness* and elevation through the mediation of humility. The Cardinal Virtues must therefore flow from the nature of Virtue not through such mediation, but immediately. Diligence follows immediately from Virtue, or love of Reason (if you love Reason, it follows immediately that you must listen to it, and in this Diligence consists), but not Wisdom, which follows only remotely from the nature of Virtue, in this way: If you love Reason, it follows that you

must listen to Reason; and if you listen you will perceive what it tells you, and it is in this that Wisdom ultimately consists. Similarly, Obedience follows immediately from the nature of Virtue (for if you love Reason, it follows immediately that you must do what it dictates, and it is in this that Obedience consists). But Freedom follows not immediately, but remotely, in this way: If you love Reason, you will do only what it dictates, and if you do only this, you will always do what you want, it will always be agreeable to you, and it is in this that freedom ultimately consists. We might speak similarly concerning Justice and Satisfaction, and also concerning Humility and Elevation, that is, Happiness or bliss. But all this will become clear in due course when we come to discuss the individual Cardinal Virtues.

2. Hence, we exclude particular Virtues, which always refer to some external circumstance; such as Temperance, which refers specifically to favourable things; Fortitude, which refers specifically to adverse things; Piety and Religion, which refer specifically to God; and Equity and Civil Justice, which refer specifically to other men. All this will be made clear in Treatise II, where I shall deal explicitly with the particular Virtues.

To Section I. § 1. Diligence.

3. Reason has these four attributes. First, there is *dictate*; secondly, *law*; thirdly, *rule*; and fourthly, the *task* that is enjoined on us. Accordingly, Virtue, which is nothing other than love of Reason, embraces Reason as pronouncing its dictate, through listening, or *diligence*; embraces Reason as promulgating *law* through *obedience*; embraces Reason as *ruling* and measuring our actions through *justice*; and finally, embraces Reason as enjoining on us our task and office through *humility*. Of these four attributes of Reason, the first is the dictate, which is the broadest and most general attribute of Reason. For Reason extends by the dictate as much to physical things as moral things, as much to speculative things as practical things (for in all these matters Reason exercises itself by dictate); through rule, law, and task, it is concerned in the strict sense only with Ethics, and things of a moral kind. From this you see that Diligence is first among the Cardinal Virtues, as it embraces Reason as it is in itself and over its whole sphere; while the other Cardinal Virtues (Obedience, Justice, and Humility) embrace Reason only as it relates to themselves; that is to say, they are concerned purely with morals.

4. In this part of the Treatise, I explained why Diligence is born out of Virtue, but not why it is the firstborn and precedes the others, an explanation that I have now given in these Annotations. And the explanation was that the primary attribute of Reason is dictate, inasmuch as dictate is both abundantly clear, and applies to Reason everywhere, whether Reason is concerned with speculative or practical matters; while the other attributes apply to Reason only when it is concerned with practical matters. The embrace of Reason by Virtue is in the first instance with Reason as dictating: with this embrace it brings forth from Reason Diligence, which is accordingly the eldest daughter born of this liaison.

5. If anyone should say that he loves melody and harmony, but when harmony, for example, is actually produced or sounds about him he covers his ears, he would appear to have said this in mockery, and his speech could hardly be said to be from the heart (for harmony has nothing about it which could capture or attract our attention unless it is captured by our ears). In the same way, if anyone claims to love Reason because he is a virtuous man, yet when it dictates and suggests something within him and in his mind, does not attend to it, and lets his mind wander, or responds to its dictate with his passions, he is easily detected as a blatant liar. For the nature of Reason consists in nothing other than a certain dictate; and whoever spurns it spurns Reason, and does not love it.

6. In fact, even from internal and insensible things; that is, from Logical, Physical, and other thoughts within us about this or that liberal or mechanical art. By turning even to such thoughts as these the mind can also be distracted from listening to Reason as the law and guide of all our actions. Not that the mind of a diligent man always turns itself away from the senses and from the kind of thoughts that have just been mentioned: it is often the case that the prescribed law of reason and obedience dictates that he should make room for them and wait upon them, but because he will have gathered from Reason previously and beforehand, as it were, the imperative that as a virtuous man he must withdraw himself wholly from such thoughts in order that he may then have room for Reason alone (for Reason, I mean to say, as ordering or forbidding), and by having room for it he will clearly perceive its wishes.

7. We are very conscious that we have Reason within us and in our mind, and that it has always been there, but we can have no recollection of when it first came to us. This is quite clear from the

principles of Reason, which are generally known as *common notions* and ideas. Even though we understand that we were at some time awakened to them by a teacher, we understand at the same time with equal clarity that he did not impart them to us but merely counselled us to turn our minds to what we already had within us. And it is this that we then experience in ourselves, as Plato once taught, when he claimed that we do not learn anything, and that when we appear to learn new things we have only the remembrance of old things, and recollect what we already knew.* Whether Plato spoke rightly or wrongly, this is not the time to discuss; but this at least is clear, that all men clearly understand, and apprehend within themselves, that Reason is something fixed deep within their minds, something that never came to them, but has been with them as long as they have been in possession of a mind, that is, as long as they have been in possession of themselves.

8. Hence, nothing is more abject than to swear by the opinions of authority, or to accept a certain argument because someone else has persuaded us of it or imposed it on us. It is lazy, stupid, and manifestly contrary to the nature of diligence, in fact contrary even to the nature of a human mind still not entirely corrupt and effete. Thus, they are well-equipped by nature who when they listen to the reasoning of others, however ingenious, compare it with the reasoning that they have within their minds. They will then approve of those external reasonings of others if they agree with their own internal reasoning, but reject them if they do not.

9. There is no discipline so useful for learning and obtaining knowledge of things as to repeat over and over again what one knows well; for repetition of things that we know is a road to the knowledge of things that we do not know; as is borne out by the common experience of all those who do not weary of such stale repetition. However many times they repeat what they have long known, they feel themselves to be always learning something new, something that falls upon them in a miraculous way, as if by divine inspiration, the tenth repetition unfolding and revealing something that the ninth repetition did not, and indeed the hundredth repetition disclosing something that the earlier repetitions had left undisclosed. And by

* See Plato's *Meno*.

so proceeding, they at last prove greater than all their peers, in fact learned and profoundly wise above all other men. For these are the shining words of Diligence: *Learn not many things, but much about a few things*; for if you learn much you will know many things, but if you learn many things you will mix them all up, and know nothing.

10. There is nothing that veils Reason from us other than our prejudices and desires; Reason by itself is clear and simple. Therefore, anyone who is accustomed to frequent Reason when it is comparatively free from these prejudices and desires of ours will also recognise it easily when it seems to be wrapped up tightly in the folds of our prejudices and desires. For he has made Reason's acquaintance as well as that of Reason's veil; and so is easily able to pierce the veil and look upon Reason with a gaze that is neither averted nor obstructed, in which unflinching gaze true wisdom consists.

11. It is worthy of note that those disciplines which are the greatest cultivators of palpable Truths, Truths so palpable that they are a popular object of ridicule, and are called fatuous (such as Geometry and Arithmetic, which make their common notions, postulates, and definitions always absolutely clear from the start, and continually instil them into their students), have to this day, throughout so many centuries, remained pure and undefiled, not only by errors, but even by conjectures, opinions, and suspicions; whilst other less rigorous disciplines have lapsed into innumerable errors, and if possible, into even more opinions, conjectures, trifles, and daydreams. This is to be observed mainly in Metaphysics and Logic, which abound everywhere in superfluities, while being still by nature true and genuine sciences no less than Mathematics.

12. The mythical sense of this fable (comparing Reason to an innamorata, with ourselves regarded as her suitor) is very obvious: nobody can master the abstruse and recondite Reason that belongs to learning and the sciences who has not first progressed through the rudiments of Reason. Hence those tears; hence that multitude of those who see too late, and lament that they have wasted their toil and sweat applying their minds to the higher sciences before mastering the lower ones, and that they wanted to fly (as the Dutch saying has it) before they had wings. Therefore, Reason is rightly depicted as a fair maiden who disdains to share the marriage-bed of wisdom with one by whom she sees her rudiments held in contempt.

13. Thus the well-known saying of Aristotle: *An adolescent is not a suitable audience for Ethics*;^{*} the reason being, as Aristotle puts it, that he is too given up to, and a servant of his passions. Accordingly, the truths of Ethics, which have to contend not only with our prejudices, but also to the greatest possible degree with our desires (as I noted in Chapter I, § 3, paragraph 3), are quite obscure and remote to adolescents (and this is to be understood above all of those adolescents who are adolescent more in mind than in years; for one will come across octogenarian children, as he says). But little by little, with age, the human mind becomes used to abstracting itself from its body, and from sensation, and as it were emancipating itself; which can happen only under the aegis of Reason, as we shall see when we come to § 2, paragraph 4.

14. I annotated paragraph 2 to the effect that Diligence turns itself away not only from sensible things, but even geometrical, arithmetical, and other such things. Consequently, I may seem to be inconsistent in placing the study of those sciences among the most potent adminicles of diligence. However, there is no contradiction; for when diligence comes to open itself to its duty, and to the dictate of Reason prescribing what has to be done, it listens with all ears, rightly putting off all other thoughts; but previously, and before it has as it were girded itself for its duty, it has rightly been open to geometrical and arithmetical thoughts, inasmuch as it is in them that that very same Reason begins to display itself most clearly which attempts to gain understanding in Ethical things, where it is wont to be much more obscure, chiefly because of our desires. These mathematical sciences are also free of all desires (for desires have no place in speculations), and sciences that are mainly speculative have this prerogative, that they are either not at all or the least infected by the prejudices of our sensations, which certainly cannot be said of Metaphysics, Physics, and Logic. In these latter our prejudices are very much at large; almost all the prevailing theories in these sciences having Sensations wandering about in them, or even opposing and rejecting them; of which we see the former in Logic, the latter in Physics and Metaphysics. Therefore, mathematical disciplines are much the most useful for leading adolescents gently towards Reason.

* Cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* I, 3, 1095 a 2.

15. Wisdom [*sapientia*] is so-called from ‘to taste’ [*sapere*], which is when we examine with our sense of taste something corporeal. The scope of the other senses reaches only to the exterior of things, and grasps only the surface of the things towards which it is directed, but taste invades and penetrates the interior parts of the body whose interior is subjected to it. For this reason it is also the case that this sense experiences things beyond the other senses: for example, we taste as warm the spirit of wine, which our touch has declared to be cold; and the gilded pills of physicians, whose appearance is attractive, taste horrible and bitter to us. It is the same with Wisdom, which is born of profound attention to Reason, invades and penetrates the object, and judges it far otherwise than the common sense of men or the “received intelligence” of the Scholastics.

16. Diligence is a perpetual grasping at Reason, wisdom the capture of it: the diligent man grasps at Reason, the wise man captures it. But by grasping at it we at length capture it, that is, diligence at length leads to wisdom. But, you will say, capture sometimes eludes him who grasps at it; and I have to say (for it must be admitted) that diligence is sometimes frustrated of wisdom; but only for the time being. In such a case, it must summon constancy into its presence, for we find that the possession of wisdom that for a long time has eluded diligence is all the more secure. They are the most firm in their knowledge who labour exceedingly for it, and without much labour they are not firm in it. Add to that, that it is also pleasant; for labours fulfilled bring pleasure, especially when they bear fruit.

17. The Scholastics distinguish *Prudence* from Ethics, in that Ethics, being abstracted from particulars (which is common to all sciences), should be more concerned with universal and general things, while Prudence should properly concern itself with particular circumstances of morals and human actions. I have here taken Prudence in such a broad sense that it also embraces the principles of Ethics.

18. In this Treatise, Philaretus is a fictitious character, who indeed loves virtue (as his name signifies), but with indiscriminating zeal, that is, insufficiently tempered by prudence; in fact, just like beginners in Ethics while they remain adolescents and are, as Aristotle rightly says, less suited to the study of Ethics; he shows his mettle to the utmost in Obligation 6. In consequence he has to be frequently corrected and instructed, and led back, not without chastisement, to the true path of virtue, from which with his imprudent

zeal he often wanders far away. See the chastisement of him in Obligation 2, and a little before that.*

19. Reply: it arises directly from obedient diligence, that is, from the diligence with which we listen to Reason when it is concerned with Physical matters, because Reason instructs us in Ethics that we must also listen to it there; but indirectly it arises from the pure diligence that is born prior to obedience out of the love of Reason, that is, Virtue. For *firstly*, we love Reason (this is Virtue); *secondly*, we are moved to listen to what it wants (this is diligence); *thirdly*, we perceive what it wants (this is wisdom). And indeed, among the other things that it wants, we sometimes perceive that it wants us to listen to it not only when it is concerned with Ethical matters, and is occupied with dictating or forbidding, but also to listen to it when it is concerned with Physical matters, and is occupied with phenomena; and so we listen just as if Reason has dictated it. And this kind of listening is a form of obedient diligence, that is, participating directly in the nature of diligence (inasmuch as it listens to Reason) and in the nature of obedience (inasmuch as it follows what Reason dictates). This *obedient* Diligence is therefore posterior to that other kind of Diligence which I called pure, and it is this latter kind that occasions wisdom in Physical matters.†

20. Whatever arises from passion is sin; for we ought not to act out of passion, but guided by Reason do whatever we do on purpose. But we must distinguish between acting *with* passion, and acting *out of* passion; for to act *with* passion is for our deed to have some passion accompanying it that will not be the cause of the deed; and this is not falling into vice, but quite the contrary, inasmuch as

* The references are to the "Obligations" that result from the virtue of Humility. Cf. Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, §§ 4–10. Note that the editor of the first complete publication of Geulincx' ethics in 1675, presumably Geulincx' student Cornelis Bontekoe (c. 1644–1685), published the work under the name *Philaretus*. It has been argued that the references to 'Philaretus' and his 'brother' (see below, Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 12, [2]) were actually meant as references to Cornelis Bontekoe and a certain Paulus Bontekoe, who also studied with Geulincx and may have been Cornelis' brother. Cf. C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme, Avec sommaire et table des matières en français*. Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgeversmaatschappij, 1954/ed. Theo Verbeek, Utrecht: HES, 1989, 182–183.

† The main text seems to be clearer on this point: although obedience as such has no place in physics, the diligence with which we strive for 'Speculative Wisdom' is similar to the virtuous attitude with which we pursue obedience to Reason in morality.

so long as we are men there is no action of ours which does not emerge unaccompanied by some passion; and the sounder and more vigorous of body we are, the more our actions are imbued with, and as it were tintured and coloured by lively passions. But to act *out of passion* is to act in such a way that it is passion which gives rise to the action; which is always and of necessity vicious (as I have just noted and demonstrated, and shall demonstrate still further in Treatise IV). For example, suppose that a father chastises his son *with anger*, when moved by Reason alone he chastises him. Then, though anger accompanies this action, he neither does anything nor refrains from doing anything on account of it. Therefore he is a virtuous father, for even though he may chastise with anger, he does not chastise *out of anger*. But a father who beats his son because he is angry with his son, so much so that anger is the reason why he beats him, is a bad man, even though there may be an absolutely just reason for beating him, and what is more, for beating him as much as and in full proportion to how much he actually beats him. For though in such a case he may easily excuse himself to his fellow men, who cannot grasp the internal affection of his mind, he nevertheless actually sins, because he acts not out of Reason (which is the just foundation), but out of Passion. These matters are explained more adequately in Treatise IV, On the Passions. When, therefore, passionate love bids us do something, we cannot help but sin in doing its bidding; but when it merely interferes with our actions there is nothing evil about it. It can accompany them, but not put itself in charge of them.

21. However, speculative Wisdom and Prudence are not in the proper sense sisters, but cousins, or the daughters of two sisters; for prudence is born out of diligence applied to moral things, but Wisdom, whether speculative or Theoretical, is born out of obedient diligence; and since this is nothing but a kind of obedience (the kind with which we obey Reason when it orders us to listen to it in respect of physical matters), it is plain that prudence and speculative wisdom are daughters of two sisters, the latter of obedience, the former of diligence. It will be explained in the course of what follows in what manner the two are sisters.

22. It is no surprise that they alone are not disturbed by their passions when they listen to Reason. As for others, they cannot listen properly and as they should, for their passions, which they are used to following and which swell from overuse, like oil poured on

flames, are a hindrance (as is explained at greater length in Treatise IV). Hence, since the latter do not listen well, neither do they grasp Reason well (in which alone wisdom consists). But the former listen as they should, and so grasp Reason as they should; and consequently, they alone grasp not only moral things, but also everything else that they have set themselves to contemplate. All this will become clearer when we come to deal with the Reward of Virtue.

23. The whole measure of wisdom, as I have now repeated many times, consists in the perception of Reason. Therefore, it is fitting that we grasp at Reason, that is, listen to it, for the nature of diligence consists in this. But if anyone grasps at Reason at the behest of some passion, by this very act he departs from Reason (since this nothing other than to sin, that is, to abandon Reason). In vain, then, he grasps at something that continually recedes from him even as he grasps at it. Anyone who grasps at something in this way never grasps it; anyone who, led on by passion, seeks Reason never finds it, for he is always being led away from Reason by passion.

24. The same thing, according to a certain manner of speaking; for in Physical or Theoretical matters, as well as in moral or Ethical matters, Reason equally dictates and suggests. But not exactly the same; for Reason is in addition a kind of law in Ethical matters (it does not simply dictate, but dictates what must be done, what must not be done, and lays on us the duty, the obligation, and the office) in a way that does not apply to Physical matters.

The argument of § 1

Diligence is listening to Reason. These matters are covered in paragraph 1.

It has two parts: Turning away from external things (for they hinder listening), and turning into oneself (for Reason, which we have to listen to, has its dwelling-place there). We naturally proceed in this way, and summon within us for examination by Reason everything that comes to us from outside. These matters are covered in paragraph 2.

The Adminicle of diligence is familiarity with Reason. This familiarity is principally entered into in two ways: first, by frequent repetition of what we know, and in which Reason is evidently present; secondly, by the cultivation of those disciplines that rejoice exceedingly in Reason and demonstration, such as Mathematics. These matters are covered in paragraph 3.

The Fruit of diligence is prudence. While diligent men grasp at Reason by listening to it, prudent men capture what they have long grasped at; for it is natural, and therefore happens entirely by nature, that those who have often grasped at something should at length also capture it. These matters are covered in paragraph 4.

Moreover, speculative wisdom, which has a great affinity with prudence, is born directly after prudence. For when prudence sees that Reason demands to be listened to in Physical matters, and complies with this demand, that same compliance or obedience brings forth theoretical and speculative wisdom. These matters are covered in paragraph 5.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience.

1. Accordingly, the virtuous man obeys what Reason dictates not because he has listened to Reason (in which case, obedience would be born out of diligence, and not directly out of Virtue itself, that is, the love of Reason), or because he has perceived what Reason says (in which case, obedience would be born out of prudence), but because he loves Reason. In fact, there is only one thing that moves him to do what Reason dictates, and that is that he loves Reason. Therefore, though obedience presupposes diligence and prudence (for it is necessary to know what Reason dictates before what Reason dictates can be done; but this in turn cannot be known unless Reason is listened to), it is not born out of them. They do not move one to obedience, but are preconditions of obedience rather than causes, since love is the only cause of obedience. He obeys Reason because he loves Reason; and so it is the exclusive love of Reason (that is, virtue) which creates obedience. But perhaps the question may be clarified by an analogy. In order that you may get warm, it is necessary to go forth and approach the fire. These are preconditions for you to get warm, but neither of them is a cause of getting warm. The cause of the heat will be the fire that you approach. Similarly, both to listen to and to perceive what Reason dictates are preconditions of obedience, but the cause of this heat, this obedience, is the love of Reason, which moves one to obey.³

³ You may have heard what Reason says, and also perceived what Reason says, but unless you also love Reason you will not do what Reason says. Hence it is love alone that moves you to obey; and then you are truly obedient.

2. The natural habitat, and as it were home and family of Reason is Ethics, in which Reason manifests itself in many guises. For in physical matters Reason does no more than *show* or speak, but in Ethics, or morals, Reason not only speaks (which applies to diligence) but in addition also *prescribes* and *forbids* (which relates to obedience), and rules (which concerns justice), and charges and obligates (which governs humility). From this you see that while in Physical matters Reason does no more than move around and as it were wander about, in Ethical matters it moves with full commitment, and as it were totally settles itself; and this is why Ethics can rightly be called the *home* of Reason. Although in practical disciplines, which concern themselves with things outside the sphere of morals (such as Logic, Painting, and other liberal or mechanical arts) Reason also in some way dictates and forbids, rules and restricts (for example, it prescribes that a syllogism should be made in such-and-such a way, and forbids it to be made otherwise, and consequently conveys rules and lays a restriction on anyone disputing or arguing), it does not forbid or prescribe absolutely, but merely conditionally, that is, if you have to construct something or other (such as a syllogism) in your mind; but in moral matters Reason prescribes or forbids absolutely, and without qualification.

3. Namely, *because* it transacts this Ethical and moral business. For to observe what Reason dictates, if it goes no further, is not moral, it does not amount to obedience; but to observe whether it is dictated by Reason or motivated by passion, to see whether it is the decent thing or whether it gives pleasure, this is moral. And if it is because it is indeed the decent thing (or Reason dictates it), it is virtuous and amounts to obedience; but if it is because it gives *pleasure* (or passion dictates it), it is vicious and amounts to self-enslavement. Now when we see and note what Reason dictates in Physics, we indeed do it either because it gives pleasure or because it is the decent thing. But such licence about doing it because it is the decent thing or because it gives pleasure, does not apply to Physics (whose whole business is discharged in the very act of consulting Reason), and so this consideration 'because it gives pleasure or because it is the decent thing' creeps out of Physics and into Ethics. Thus it is well said, that in physical matters there is no obedience and no servitude, for these are due to Ethics alone.

4. Hence arises the distinction, insisted on by the Scholastics, between a positive and a negative precept. A *positive* precept oblig-

ates one now and then (so to speak), a *negative* precept obligates one at all times. Thus, *Honour thy father* is a positive precept, and so is not always an obligation (for he does not have to be honoured all the time, but only when an occasion has arisen when it appears that he should be honoured); but *Thou shalt not kill* is a negative precept, and there can be no holiday from it, that is, you shall never kill, neither now nor then, nor at any other time. Hence, *negative* precepts have a conjunctive sense through the presence of the word *neither* (as if you should say: you will not do it now, or then, or at any other moment of time), while *positive* precepts have a disjunctive sense through the presence of the word *or* (as if you should say: you will do it now or then). Moreover, they also declare that positive precepts have negative counterparts. For example, *honour* has the counterparts *do not harm*, *do not offer injury*, which are always obligations; for even though parents are not always worthy of honour, they should never be harmed or subjected to violence.

5. The high road to true obedience is to leave behind that superficial or insubstantial obedience which does service for obedience among men. For it is like the outward accoutrements and face of true obedience, a likeness that leads many astray; in fact, such a likeness that many (among them even some acute Philosophers as well as the whole mass of corrupt politicians) recognise no other kind of obedience beyond what is accorded to rulers and magistrates.

6. Human law (and we should understand the same of custom and usage, for they have the force of law) can never in itself place us under an obligation. All the same, one sometimes has to do what men dictate, not because they dictate it but because God has dictated that we should on occasion go along with them (for example, we often have to do what parents and magistrates dictate), or because we cannot obey divine law or Reason unless we do what some man has dictated. Thus, we sometimes also have to do what bandits have ordered, for example if they hold you up in the forest and order you to hand over to them your money, your clothing, and your weapon; in fact, even if they order you to do filthy things, to the extent that they are not directly contrary to God's law (such as to devour cattle dung [if you will pardon the expression] or even human faeces) you will have to do them, not because of the bandits' orders but because otherwise God's law on the maintenance of life cannot be observed; concerning which see Obligation 2 below. From this it is plain that though virtuous men often do many of the things that

vicious men have ordered, they never do them because such men order them, but because an instance of divine obligation springs from an order that they have issued.

7. For only God, or Reason, can be the end-for-which of obedience (I mean, the ultimate end; for this alone is in the proper sense an end); and it is never right for a man to be dignified with that honour. However, a man can be a subordinate end-for-which: this comes about when we obey, rightly and with compelling reason, our parents and the civil magistracy; for in that case they are indeed an end-for-which of obedience. We obey them because God dictates that we should obey them; but the overriding obedience is due to God, because He is the ultimate end of obedience; we obey such men because this is obeying God as dictating it. Moreover, we often do what someone else has ordered, but in such a manner that we do not obey him, not even as a subordinate end of obedience; as when we do what the bandits in the forest order, threatening to cut us up unless we do it; for in such a case we (if we are to be virtuous men) merely obey God because He orders us to preserve our lives, and we do not inwardly attach any obedience to the bandits. All this is explained at greater length a little later in paragraph 4.⁴

8. Of course, Reason is a law, and human laws are of similar tenor and of similar outward appearance to the true divine law. Hence, anyone who has not been used to observe the difference between them will as a result be easily deceived, taking things that are similar to be things that are the same, and confusing them. Out of this error (for every error is a slippery slope towards other errors) there easily flows in turn the belief that there is no law but human

⁴ Virtuous men obey *absolutely* God alone; but they also obey certain men, and in a way approaching absolute and perfect obedience when they are men subordinate to God; in other words, they obey them because God has ordered us to obey them. In this category are parents, whom (as the name itself signifies) we ought to obey; virtuous magistrates and rulers are also in this category. We are said to obey them directly, since they are, as it were, on the straight line along which the will of a virtuous man travels towards God as the ultimate end-for-which of our obedience, even though they do not stand in the last place on that line, so that our will is not in the proper sense aimed at them; just as someone approaching The Hague from Leiden does not in the proper sense approach *Huis ten Deyl*, nor in the proper sense the woodlands, but The Hague, and this alone puts him on course, and on his journey. Finally, there is a third method of obeying indirectly, which is the most imperfect of all, and that is when we obey someone not standing on the line along which our will travels towards God; as when we obey a bandit in the woods.

law, and that there is nothing in it that transcends the custom and behaviour of men; to which opinion Aristotle inclines, as is plain from the references cited here and from many others. And in our own time, many triflers (called 'Statesmen' by the vulgar, though undeservedly) do not only incline to that opinion but fall headlong into it; a fate that befalls them through ignorance of true philosophy, ignorance from which comes nothing that is not bad.

9. This holds most strongly of all of humility, and things in respect of it. For nothing can fall more discordantly on people's ears⁵ than this principle that is the foundation of right Ethics: Do nothing for one's own sake; undertake nothing with a view to one's own happiness and blessedness. To be sure, people are persuaded that everything should be done for their own sake and for the sake of their happiness, as those who seem to them to be less virtuous do everything for the sake of monetary gain, use, and their pleasures, and those who seem to them to be very virtuous do everything to gain the eternal blessedness that is supposed to await them in the next life. Neither sticks to his office, neither sticks to his obligation; for neither is it enough to do what God has prescribed he should do.

10. Not without justification, if what he stated is true, namely, that Ethical matters depend not so much on Nature and Reason as on human choice; and they are of no greater value, if such is the case. A great many give an excessive amount of attention to such things that are merely probable, and hence that just complaint and protest of Cicero: *What? Shall the question whether the birth of a slave-girl is to be regarded as a product be disputed among the rulers of the state; shall these things* (by which he means our very morals) *which sustain the whole of life be neglected?* (*On the End*, at the beginning of Book 2).*

11. This vain and vulgar man sets so much store by those crude Treatises on Ethics lest there should emerge at some time one more

⁵ They do not labour overmuch concerning what constitutes humility, given the prejudices of their understanding (for what is clearer than that a law does not favour anyone, and that consequently he who lays down a law does not establish it for his own sake?), but labour exceedingly over their own desires, which always incline them to do everything on account of themselves. So long as they do not overcome their desires, they make judgements not in accordance with their understanding, but (so to speak) as the mood takes them, that is, as they desire.

* The passage in fact occurs in Cicero, *De Finibus bonorum et malorum* I, 4.

polished who can rebut such gross and crude Ethics (in the mode of life of which they are liable to become fixed and engrossed), and will cleanse that Augean stable in which Aristotle himself, with his pagan co-philosophers, floundered, and (as we see here) would still wallow freely and without reproach. Thus, he discourages the best minds from the study of Ethics by persuading them that it is not to their taste, that it is an activity not for the subtle but for crude and gross wits, and that anyone in the crowd is capable of it.

12. See, he indicates that there is no place in Ethical matters for great subtlety, and that therefore they should be treated only in a rough and ready manner. But how wrong he is, is plain enough from the infinite number of errors in which, as a result of treating them so roughly, he entangled both himself and his Ethics. First of all, he strays with the other pagans from the gate of humility, which he could have recognised with no trouble if something more subtle (such as informs, often too subtly, other parts of his Philosophy) had informed his Ethics. It is not difficult to see that if one would embrace Reason (for it is God's law), one must withdraw from one's own embraces. Since law, as such, always dictates one's task and office, it must not concern itself with the benefit of him for whom it is laid down. Let the benefit be what flows from the office onto him who correctly discharges it.

13. Such as glory, or the desire to seek for oneself honours and dignities, which he refers to the virtue of magnificence or magnanimity; such as anger and the inclination to act out of anger, which he greatly commends in warlike matters and other arduous and difficult tasks; and in general action arising from passion (which is sin its very self). He recognised no virtue other than what acts out of passions, albeit passions moderated or confined by a certain mean; as we shall see in due course later on, in Treatise IV.

14. The prime, fundamental, and essential freedom is: *do what thou wilt*. This kind of freedom is found in every moral act, whether it is concerned with vice or virtue; and acts that lack this kind of freedom are concerned with nature rather than morals. In contrast, accidental freedom is: *do what thou hast determined upon*; and many of our acts lack this kind of freedom. We often perform acts out of habit, or swept away by some violent passion, before having determined what is to be done. These kinds of freedom are found not among the fruits or rewards of virtue, but in its exercise. There is, accordingly, another, and third kind of freedom, for which all strive, and

from which freedom [*libertas*] derives its name; that is, *do as thou pleasest*; or to speak in more elevated language (for *libere* and *lubere* sound bad, inspiring in whoever hears them not just freedom but lust), *do as thou art minded*. For example, the merchant who when a storm blows up flings his merchandise into the sea does *not* enjoy this kind of freedom:* though in such a case he may do what he wishes, and indeed what he has determined upon (and therefore is free in the sense of the two former kinds of freedom), he nevertheless does not do what pleases him, but on the contrary acts against how he is minded, and would by no means do it if he were not forced to do it. In this sense of freedom the virtuous man is always and everywhere absolutely free, and he alone. He never does anything to which he is not minded, anything that he might have cause to regret once he has given his mind to the whole act and its attendant circumstances. This, I must add, is because when he gives his mind only partially to the act he will often seem to act against what he is minded to do. For instance, he surrendered his livelihood and fortune to the thief or tyrant who demanded them; or perhaps he slew his father, led on by invincible ignorance, having judged him to be an enemy. In such cases the virtuous man seems to act contrary to how he is minded (for he would not have surrendered his livelihood to the tyrant if it had been possible to save himself without surrendering them; nor would he have slain his father if he had known him to be his father). But it only seems so; and this is just how it seems when he gives his mind only to part of the act. When, however, he considers the whole of his act (and sees that he surrendered his livelihood to the tyrant because he is bound by his obligation and by the law of God, which is that life must be preserved; or that he slew his father as one who was obliged to slay an enemy of his country and thought his father to be such an enemy), it cannot displease him, for this is to act throughout according to the dictate of Reason. He wishes for nothing that disagrees with that dictate, and for everything that agrees with that dictate. He will neither regret, nor can he ever come to regret doing what in the example cited was either out of necessity surrendering his livelihood, or encompassed

* I.e. under the condition that the merchant is not virtuous in the sense of enjoying the freedom of intention that accompanies an act on account of reason, but is unwilling to do away with his merchandise and suffers from his loss. See also hereafter, note 15.

by invincible ignorance slaying his father. They were his acts only insofar as they were not contrary to Reason.

15. That is, what pleases him, or what he is minded to do. But in general, vicious men also do what they will; in fact, they also do what they have determined upon, or act deliberately, for these things are a feature of every moral act, whether good or bad. However, we modify such an expression as *what pleases* because it sounds quite bad, and in common usage signifies lust rather than freedom, as we noted earlier. Even though vicious men may thus be free in the two former senses of freedom, they never rejoice in freedom of the third kind. They never do *as they are minded*, they never do anything that they will necessarily not come to regret, they always act like the merchant who regretfully casts his merchandise into the sea. And though they may often seem to the vulgar to do as they please, they must at times face many things which they do regretfully and without pleasure, and not as they are minded. For their care and labour can be frustrated of its desired success; in fact, they are always and of necessity frustrated.⁶ In this frustration there is always necessarily regret; but virtuous men can never be frustrated, as is proved here in the main text.

16. To serve someone is nothing other than to do something *because* he commands it; but to serve someone is not to do *what* he commands. For unless at the same time you do it *because* he commands it, you do not serve him; as is quite evident from the example that follows next. Thus, the virtuous man very often does *what* some

⁶ Vicious men do all things for the sake of themselves (for sin is nothing other than lawless action: one who acts within the law never acts for the sake of himself, but the lawless have nothing on account of which to act other than themselves). Hence, since vicious men do all things for the sake of themselves, their every action naturally and with fatal necessity works against them, that is, works to their utter ruin and destruction, just as pouring oil on a fire naturally tends not to douse it but to inflame it (this I shall show later on when I come to discuss the penalty of sin). Since, therefore, they will always act to advance themselves, so that their actions never advance them but always harm them badly, it is obvious that they always and everywhere frustrate themselves of their desired end, and always act reluctantly; they never act as they are minded, never do what pleases them, but always what displeases them. If anyone pours oil onto a fire in order to extinguish it, believing it to be water, he is regretful, he does not do as he pleases, or what pleases him, but what displeases him, in that the nature of the act is out of harmony with how he is minded, and tends to something else. In the same way, vicious men, since they act for the sake of themselves, and the nature of their action is against themselves, will always prove to be frustrated, and will act always against how they are minded.

man commands, but never does it *because* the man commands it; therefore, he serves no man, but only Reason and God; for he does *what* they command, but in such a way that he does it only *because* they command it.

17. Nor strictly this; for the will of the virtuous man is ultimately subordinate to the end-for-which. Thus, the virtuous man does not do something because he wishes it, but because God wishes it, that is, because Reason (which, as an expression of the will of God, is certainly a law) dictates it. Hence, it is plain that the virtuous man can never be free in the sense of not serving anyone; for he serves God and Reason, and his entire freedom consists in that service, since freedom that is absolute and exempt from all service can be found only in God. The virtuous man does what he wishes only in the sense that he wishes nothing but what Reason dictates, against which he does not do anything without willing it; for it is impossible for him to act contrary to Reason against his will.

18. You will say: there is a great difference between this neighbour of yours and the master of the virtuous man; for your neighbour's imperative in no way furnishes a cause for your action, but the imperative of the master is a cause, or at least a precondition of many of the actions that the virtuous man who is his servant performs, as he would not perform those actions unless his master had ordered them. I reply: it is true, and accordingly it is rightly said that, *Every analogy is lame*. The analogy that is pressed here consists only, and has its force and energy, in the fact that neither the imperative of the circumstances nor the command of the master in the example cited is in any way a true cause of action or an obedient end. That holds in neither case here, because neither will you leave the house unless your neighbour demands it (you do only *what* he calls for, you do not do it *because* he calls for it), nor does the virtuous man bear a burden because his master dictates it, but because Reason dictates it (which in this case happens to dictate that we should remain here among the living until God summons us). Hence, he too does *what* his master orders, he does not do it *because* his master orders it.

19. Never do anything intrinsically evil, or such as cannot be rightly done; for the command of a master, and even danger to life, cannot remove the intrinsic and essential evil from such things. So, in this case the virtuous man will see that he is absolved of the obligation that dictates that we remain here, and that another is enjoined

on him, which orders us immediately to obey God, who is summoning us to depart; and he is no more anguished and disturbed of mind than a servant faithful to his master who leaves off the task that his master had imposed on him when he is ordered to do something else, inasmuch as for him his only principle of action is this: *God commands, Reason demands*. Whether God commands this or that is of no great concern to him, whose only principle of action is that *God has commanded it*.

20. You will say: vicious men also do what they wish, and because they wish it. I reply: it is true, if you understand it in a superficial sense, for it is requisite to the morality of any action; but vicious men do not do what they wish in the sense that they never do anything regretfully, and never do anything to which they are not minded. For if a vicious man were to be sold, and be compelled to do service, as the virtuous man here in the text is said to be, it is certain that he will do many things against his will: for he seeks nothing other than comforts and pleasures, and the like. He may also desire life itself to continue on account of the pleasure of living and the horror of death; but in his servitude he will be forced to do and suffer many things contrary to these. In contrast, the virtuous man, who does not seek such things, and does not wish even to live for any reason other than because God has commanded it, and in everything else respects nothing but God's ordinance, does nothing here to which he is not minded; since Reason flourishes here in servitude just as well as elsewhere in freedom. For both kinds of fortune (I mean, favourable and adverse) are directed by Reason, and it has the same validity in both. Therefore, the virtuous man, who seeks only Reason, and rejoices in it alone, rejoices in adversity no less than in prosperity, and there can be nothing in any of these things to which he is not minded. But vicious men, continually seeking themselves, continually lose themselves through seeking themselves, and every action of theirs naturally tends to their ultimate and lamentable ruin. It follows from this, therefore, that they never do as they are minded; for someone who is continually frustrated of his desired success does the complete opposite of what he was minded to do. But at this juncture it is too early and premature to consider something that will be more broadly covered when I come to speak in Treatise V of the penalty of sin.

The Argument of § 2

Obedience is an exercise of Reason. It is born of virtue, that is, love of Reason, inasmuch as Reason is a law; for whoever loves virtue as a law must obey it. These matters are covered in paragraph 1.

Just as there are two divisions of law, to order and to prohibit, so also are there two divisions of Obedience, to do and not to do. These matters are covered in paragraph 2.

The Adminicle of Obedience is, with the utmost diligence to beware of the Obedience of men. We must no doubt on occasion do what men order, but never because they order it. Here let us glance at Aristotle, who vacillates, and complains that he cannot adequately distinguish between the Obedience due to Reason and the Obedience due to men; and consequently conceives of Ethics as something to be treated only cursorily, and not deserving anything more, as something vague, and similar to, or even the same as things pleasing to men. These matters are covered in paragraph 3.

The Fruit of Obedience is Freedom, or not doing anything unwillingly; freedom that he alone who obeys only Reason possesses always and everywhere. For there is no conceivable instance in which he could be compelled to act unwillingly, since Reason plays an equal, and equally valid part in both kinds of fortune, and in every state and condition of life. Consequently, whoever respects Reason alone, and stands and falls by Reason alone, can never be forced against his will to do that to which he would not be minded. These matters are covered in paragraph 4.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice.

1. Since that qualification is not necessary to the definition of Virtue (as was shown in Chapter I, § 2, paragraphs 3 and 4), a sufficient account of Justice is given through the genus (which is *love*) as well as through the difference (which is *Reason*). For Reason cannot be loved truly unless it is loved exclusively; and although one might love many things, it is certain that the nature of Reason is such that it cannot tolerate anything else being loved as well as itself. All this is shown in the Annotations above.

2. According to how it is considered, justice both precedes and follows obedience. It precedes obedience in the sense that there cannot be a complete act of obedience in which justice does not have its share; for there is no act of obedience in which there may be

either more or less than Reason dictates. And it follows obedience in the sense that justice presupposes something in which it can take away the *more and less*, in which it can take away the *too much and too little*; and this is a certain rough and incomplete act of obedience. In a word, therefore: justice follows incomplete obedience, but precedes complete and perfect obedience.

3. The mythology of the fable becomes very clear on the basis of what I noted just now. Namely, that the Cardinal Virtues are here considered in terms of the fable as sisters: for they are sired by the same father, that is, *Reason*, out of the same mother, that is, *Virtue*, which by the involvement in it of Reason and love (for virtue is *love of Reason*) conceives and brings forth into the light for us that noble family, I mean Diligence, Obedience, Justice, and Humility. Hence, they are rightly treated as sisters in the fable—sisters who purposely hide from us the order of their nativity, and do not let it be known which of them is the senior by birth, and which the junior, to the end that, according to how we consider them, we should understand one as sometimes prior to another, and at other times posterior; as I noted just now in respect of Obedience and Justice, and which in respect of the others will shortly follow in the text.

4. This ambiguity in the fable derives from the various ways in which you can consider it. If you consider Reason, or the *logos*, as only *dictating* (thus conceiving Diligence out of Virtue), Diligence precedes Obedience; but if you consider the *logos* not as just dictating but also as *ordering* and *forbidding* (thus conceiving Obedience out of Virtue), you cannot have Diligence, or anything that belongs to Virtue, without Obedience.

5. They are Goddesses, because they join and link us so closely with God. Hence comes all our blessedness and happiness, hence we ourselves become as it were lesser gods, if we let ourselves be joined with God by their ministry. Truly delightful, therefore, are those things which bring this about, so that it may fittingly be said: *There is nothing more beautiful than the righteousness of God.**

6. It is clear enough from the Dutch word for lust [*Onkuisheyt*].†

* *Vero bono secundum Deum nihil pulchrius esse*: the idea being that virtue will make us godlike. Cf. the expression *secundum Deum* in the Vulgate Latin version of 2 *Corinthians* 7: 9 and *Ephesians* 4: 24.

† *Onkuisheyt*, or *onkuisheid* in modern Dutch spelling, literally meaning ‘unchastity’.

7. The vulgar school of Ethicists seems to have regarded those vices in which there seemed to be more activity as belonging to excess; but assigned to defect those vices in which there is more inactivity, idleness, and, as it were, rest. Thus they called arrogance, luxury, prodigality, and rashness vices *in excess*, because there is a reference to activity in these words; and on the other hand stupor, miserliness, and sheepishness they would call vices *in defect*, because there would seem to be little or no activity present in them. But in the first place, that very appearance is false, for it is certain that misers are often more active than spendthrifts, and the painstaking more active than the rash, the latter in order to maintain their lives, the former in order to keep their fortune. Secondly, they are also mistaken in thinking that there is less activity in rest than in motion (which Natural Philosophy disproves);* and in persuading themselves that they are all vices in which they believed there to be more motion and which sounded as if they involve more activity, ascribing them to excess. Therefore, we should not say that vice is absolutely in excess any more than in defect, as their opinion has it, but relatively, and with order and respect to a certain office of virtue. Hence, the same vice is found equally in excess and defect, if we measure it according to different offices of virtue. Thus, Miserliness is defective if it is measured according to the office of liberality, but excessive if it is measured according to the office of frugality. All this is covered in the text.

8. An adjective is said by Logicians to be alienating when in apposition to a noun it reverses the meaning of the noun from its proper meaning into an alien, and as it were contrary meaning; for instance, *false* alienates gold, for false gold is no longer gold but oricalch, or something of the sort. Such adjectives as *more* and *less* are always alienating, as is very easily seen when they are attached to the names of numbers: *more than four* is no longer *four*, but at least *five*; and similarly, *less than four* is no longer *four*, but at most *three*. And what holds thus of numbers also holds of some other things. For essences are similar to numbers: if you add to them or subtract something from them they change their nature, and no longer retain their former sense, as Philosophers constantly remind us.

* Mechanical philosophy interpreted rest in terms of a *vis permanendi* that guaranteed the cohesion of natural bodies. Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Physica Vera*, esp. Treatise III, "De Quietate", as well as *Disputatio Physica* III, thesis XII, *Opera* II, 408–421 and 503, respectively.

LIBERALITY	PRODIGALITY		FRUGALITY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	MISERLINESS		

NOBILITY	ARROGANCE		MODESTY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	SHEEPISHNESS		

RELIGION	SUPERSTITION		MANLY PIETY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	IMPIETY		

GOOD HUMOUR	BUFFOONERY		GRAVITY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	CLODDISHNESS		

9. It is apparent in this figure, which could be multiplied endlessly: by selecting two virtues, or rather two offices of virtue that are in some way opposed, and appending to each of them its defect or excess (as is done in the figure), it will always be plain that the vice which is in excess of one of them will be in defect of the other, and *vice versa*.

For example, in place of liberality and frugality in one of the figures, and again in place of nobility and modesty in another, we may put, let us say, Religion and (for want of a better name) Manly Piety, that is, that virtue which gives one timely warning against the pettifogging and quibbling of self-righteous men and women. Let Impiety and Superstition be placed along opposite sides of a rectangle, and you will see at once that Impiety is in defect of Religion and in excess of Manly Piety. This kind of figure will also help when we do not want to be held up by lack of suitable names. Things do not depend on names, and if there are not names for newly-discovered things, let some be devised: that has always been allowed among virtuous men.

*It has been right, and always will
To give a name to what has none.**

Last among these you have a figure with Good Humour and Gravity placed in opposition, and also along its sides buffoonery and cloddishness. Buffoonery is in excess of good humour and in defect of gravity; cloddishness is in excess of gravity, and in defect of good humour.

10. A matter of necessity when it comes to curbing the Devil (of whom we shall speak in Treatise IV, when we discuss the enemies of virtue), who urges us: *Continue, because you have begun*; and against whom virtue holds up this shield: *Nothing in excess*. For with the Devil urging you on it is easy to wander from the mean of virtue into excess; and anyone who has decided to appear liberal easily degenerates into prodigality; anyone who has decided to present himself as frugal easily degenerates into miserliness; nobility degenerates into arrogance, modesty into sheepishness, religion into superstition, manly piety into impiety, good humour into frivolity; gravity into moroseness and cloddishness; and so on. There is always more danger from excess than from defect; for one who has decided to be liberal does not so easily degenerate into miserliness; frugality does not so easily degenerate into prodigality; nobility does not so easily degenerate into sheepishness; and so on; because the wiles of the Devil have less force in this direction.

11. Metaphysicians customarily assign three properties to being, namely, *one*, *true*, and *perfect*; but a fourth is really required, and that is *pure*. Just as each thing is the *one* thing that it is (for example, a stream is one stream even though it may have many drops), just as each thing is the *true* thing that it is (as a stream is a true stream), and again is the *perfect* thing that it is (for an imperfect stream, an imperfect table, and an imperfect house are not the things themselves but parts of them), so also each thing is the *pure* thing that it is; for an impure thing is not that thing, but that thing and something else which is mixed with it. Thus, impure gold is not gold but gold mixed with dross; impure wine is not wine but wine with lees or something else mixed with it; and so on for the rest. From this it clearly follows that Justice is found in a thing according to each

* Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 58–59.

of its properties (I mean purity and perfection, as we saw in paragraph 2), and in consequence is necessarily found according to each of its properties in the office of a virtue; so that, if it is not a perfect, or not a pure office of a virtue, it can hardly deserve to be regarded as an office.

12. It is a very obvious and too frequent misuse of language. Out of sycophancy flattering names are bestowed upon infamy; slaughter and rapine are called martial virtue; meanness and miserliness come with the name of frugality, and impiety its very own self loves to be called manly and robust piety; and so on. To a vice that belongs to excess the flatterer affixes the name of the very virtue of which it is in excess. And on the other hand, out of the foulest malice⁷ and malevolence he applies to the best of virtues the names of vices; the piety and religion of virtuous men are called superstition; their masculine piety is branded with the mark of impiety; frugality is called miserliness; and this is how the malicious man and disparager fastens on a virtuous man the name of a vice that belongs to excess. And from this, incidentally, you see that in the eyes of vulgar prejudice virtue has a greater affinity with its excesses than with its defects. Nor does it stop here: when such contrary names are imposed on things, whether through flattery or malice, it can then easily happen later that the things themselves seem to be what is implied by their names; and so, quite unreasonably, they thenceforth flee virtue that is condemned to live under a mask of vice, and pursue vice in its sheep's clothing of virtue as glorious.

13. I would not want anyone to conclude from this that I regard all sins as equal (in the same way as I shall show later, in Treatise II, that all virtues are equal). For *more* and *less* hold not of virtue, which itself holds the supreme position (just as in a straight line there is no more or less, since what is straight can only be absolutely straight), but of sin, which is a deviation from the way of virtue,

⁷ The two most pestilential plagues in a Commonwealth, slander and flattery, act so as to drive all Ethics from the minds of men, while producing confusion between virtue and vice; for the flatterer fastens the names of virtues on vices, the slanderer the names of vices on virtues. Hence it comes about that the more uncultured kind of men flee virtue, which they have heard branded with a foul name, as if it were vice, and instead of virtue follow vice, which they have heard dignified with a fair name. The distinction between virtue and vice having become uncertain or even non-existent, the Commonwealth (whose entire well-being derives from its virtuous citizens, who without a choice between virtue and vice cannot be virtuous) may fall to ruin.

and in which one can discern *more* or *less* deviation. For *good arises from a general cause, evil from individual defects* (as philosophers acutely observe);* hence, while there can be many defects, which consequently can add up to a greater or less number, good can only be one and general. However, what the scope of *more* and *less* should be (for such qualifications apply to the operations of the mind, of which the vulgar are ignorant), I explain in my *Metaphysics*, principally in the part dealing with Aristotelian Metaphysics; which here would be too much of a detour.†

14. The sufficiency that results from purity and perfection combined, that is, from the cutting away of what is too much and [the adding to] what is too little; that sufficiency, I say, is the fruit and essential reward of justice, which is inseparable from it. For when we take away what was too much, and make up what was too little and incomplete, it results necessarily in that state of sufficiency than which nothing more sublime, nothing more heavenly, can be conceived; for things are never better than when they are just enough. Beyond this essential sufficiency of justice we find an accidental kind of sufficiency, which is commonly called in the vernacular ‘contentment’: it is a passion that belongs to affective love, and is by far the most pleasant kind of passion.

15. Led astray by the wiles of the Devil. For the Devil always incites one to excess, which he markets under the name of virtue or, as is noted here in the text, greater virtue. Concerning this, see below in Treatise IV.

16. A common but ridiculous delusion of the vulgar; for with this they distinguish and single out whoever they would be seen as wanting to flatter. For if it is more than enough, it is done badly and foolishly, as *more than enough* necessarily involves something done *in vain* (as will presently be shown in the text); but to act *in vain* is to act foolishly and inappropriately. Accordingly, when they flatter someone with epithets such as liberal, modest, or generous etc, they really make him sound fatuous and ridiculous. However, those who pay

* *Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex singulis defectibus*; a slight variation on the Latin saying *bonum est ex integra causa; malum ex quocumque* [or *quovis*] *defectu*. The expression occurs also in Descartes. Cf. Étienne Gilson, *Index scolastico-cartésien*, Paris: Vrin, 1979, 35.

† Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Part 1, § 3, “De Gradibus Substantiae”, in *Opera* II, esp. 219, where it is argued that although snow may be whiter than a whitewashed wall, the *whiteness* of snow should not be called whiter.

us such compliments in the common currency of life, and will praise us by saying that we are too generous, and that we have served up a feast, should not be taxed with too grave a censure. Such sayings are sometimes well-meant, and do not come from any anxiety to flatter us, often meaning nothing other than that we are really generous and liberal, more so than those who are often credited with such qualities out of flattery, and who are perhaps not even generous or liberal enough. The best interpretation of words depends on the intention of the speaker, as I have said in my *Logic*.*

17. It is tempting to believe that defect is worse than excess, inasmuch as excess includes something good, namely, moderation or sufficiency (excess being sufficiency plus something more), while in defect there may be nothing good. But when one considers the matter carefully, the principle of excess and of defect is the same: in both there is something good, in both something bad; in each the beginning is good, the end bad; for in defect one attempts *sufficiency* (and this is good), but does not attain it (which is bad); in excess one attains sufficiency (and this is good), but instead of remaining there attempts more (which is bad). But because it appears that defect can exist without any attempt at the mean, that is, at *sufficiency*, the vulgar have always esteemed excess more than defect; for *defect* and *vice* are to them synonymous, but not *excess* and *vice*. However, this is not the case: defect is never so defective that one cannot find some good in it, that is, some attempt at the mean. Just as nothing is so false that we cannot find anything true in it, and nothing is so crooked that we cannot find something straight in it, so nothing is so bad that we cannot find anything good in it; for if there were absolutely nothing good in it, then it would be nothing at all (nothing, I mean, in the natural sense, when we speak of natural evil; and nothing in the moral sense, when we speak of moral evil). But the occasion of differentiating and elucidating these matters at greater length will perhaps present itself later on.

The argument of § 3

Justice is the fair application of Reason. It arises also from Virtue, or love of Reason, as the rules and proportions of our actions; for

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Logica fundamentis suis restituta*, Part 4, Section 2, Chapter 8, § 1, in *Opera* I, 221.

no-one loves a measure or a rule, unless what is to be measured or proportioned is fair to him. This covers paragraph 1.

There are two parts to this fairness: To cut away what is superfluous to the proportion (and this can be called purity), and to supply what is required to make up the proportion (which is perfection). With these parts, like two hands, Justice protects us against two vices, that is, excess and defect: purity, or its right hand, which bears a sword, keeps at bay and guards against the former; perfection, or its left hand, which is equipped with a scale, the latter. This covers paragraph 2.

The Adminicle of Justice is serious consideration of the essence of things, and consists in number and proportion, inasmuch as a thing may change its nature if you add or subtract some small thing from it. In particular, actions will not be virtuous (that is, in accordance with the dictate of Reason) if there is anything in them, however small, that is more or less than Reason would dictate. This covers paragraph 3.

The essential Fruit of Justice is that sufficiency which arises from the avoidance of both the superfluous and the deficient; the accidental Fruit, on the other hand, is the sufficiency which consists in the passion commonly known as *contentment*.

By way of an appendix: the vulgar acknowledge vice more in defect than in excess. However, excess is no less vicious, inasmuch as it has within itself something that is in vain, which is universally admitted to be vicious. This covers paragraph 4.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 1. Humility.

1. This little qualification is added for the sake of reassurance, not out of necessity. For it suffices to humility that it is disregard of oneself; a disregard that will be found nowhere else save with the love of God and Reason. All who are not aroused by this love to disregard themselves, to neglect themselves, and as it were cast themselves down, never do anything but take care of themselves and their own interest. Therefore, they who let their own households go to ruin, who are drunkards, who are neglectful of themselves and their own affairs, who slumber away all their days, are just those who labour most assiduously in their own interest; for it is on account of themselves, and because it is too much trouble, that they are idle and desert their post; it is on account of their pleasure and lust that they indulge their appetites and undermine their health. They too

who in despair take their own life do it ultimately for their own sake, that is, in order to escape poverty, disgrace, punishment, and other things of that kind, which the vulgar call *calamities*. In the end, whatever men do intentionally, it is either because Reason dictates it, or because it pleases them, (for if you do not act because Reason dictates, then you act because it is agreeable, because it pleases you, because it seems best, because you have chosen to act in such-and-such a way). If they act for the latter reason, for the sake of themselves and in their own interest, they are consequently not humble, and do not disregard themselves, but regard themselves in all things. But if they act for the former reason, then inasmuch as they disregard themselves they also open themselves exclusively to Reason. Therefore, there can be no true disregard of oneself other than out of love of God and Reason.

2. One disregards oneself in the positive sense if one aims at the very state of being despised, and wilfully and intentionally seeks to be disregarded and despised. This is far from how the virtuous man is disposed: he disregards himself only in the negative sense of not taking care of himself. This cannot happen unless he takes the utmost care of Reason, as has now been conclusively demonstrated.

3. The virtuous man, so far as his intention is concerned, in no way cares for himself, and does not work in his own interest; but so far as the result is concerned, cares for himself best of all, and labours hard in his own interest. This is because everything he does tends naturally and necessarily to make him supremely happy and blessed (as will become clear later on when we deal in Treatise V with the Reward of Virtue). With vicious men the opposite holds: so far as their intention is concerned, they care for themselves best of all, and continually labour in their interest (as can be seen in what we noted at the beginning of this subsection), but so far as the result or outcome is concerned, profoundly neglect themselves, and hate themselves worst of all; for everything they do tends naturally to their ruin, and to their lamentable, final, and most wretched doom; as will emerge starkly in Treatise V, where I also discuss the penalty of sin.

4. Reason dictates this by proceeding through a number of steps, which we shall traverse a little later when we come to speak of obligations; for the time being we shall just note it in passing. Reason, then, dictates that we remain among the living until we are released (for having been sent here by God, we have by this very fact been

ordered to remain here until something else is imposed on us); if we must remain here, we must eat; if we must eat, we must also work; if we must work, we must keep our body fit for work; for this we must give our body rest and ease, and our mind recreation and pleasure. The virtuous man is always ascending and descending this ladder: he seeks ease that he may be fit for work; he wants to be fit for work that he may work; he wants to work that he may have something to eat; he wants to eat that he may live; he wants to live because God has ordered it, not because it pleases him, and not because life (as it has become popular to say) is so sweet; and with this last step the virtuous man will pause, and be content to have obeyed God. From all this it is very clear that though he will on occasion pursue ease and pleasure, he never pursues them for himself, or for the sake of having them, but because God on occasion obliges him to pursue them; and thus we see how this fair chain is perpetually held together by its admirable links.

5. In what manner humility is a daughter of Virtue, and of the *logos*, or Reason (the latter being her father, the former her mother), may easily be understood from the Annotations to paragraph 1 of the preceding § 3, on Justice.

6. For humility is a daughter of the *logos* and of virtue, not a granddaughter, as nothing intervenes between herself and her parents, that is, no other generation is interposed. Even though diligence, obedience, and justice will take precedence, and also their fruits and as it were their daughters, none of them has any claim to be the mother of humility, that is, none of them can claim to be the cause, but at most a precondition of humility. And it is not because the virtuous man has listened to Reason, or perceives Reason, or has obeyed it, or was just, that he neglects himself, but because his whole nature, that which moves him to neglect himself, is love of Reason, that is, Virtue; he neglects himself only and for no other cause than that he loves Reason, or the law of God.

7. Humility is the union of obligation and the task that Reason imposes on us. Reason indeed is in itself a dictate (when virtue loves the *logos* in this way, it brings forth diligence); Reason is also in itself, though only with respect to our acts, a law (and virtue, touched by this love, brings forth obedience to its *logos*); Reason is also the proportioning of our morals and actions (and when virtue embraces the *logos* in this way, it brings forth justice from it); lastly, Reason also produces some effect on us, namely, an obligation and a task, as

well as the office that it imposes on us. When virtue shoulders this task, it brings forth humility; for it is impossible that it should undertake its task, and yet love itself, since the task, as such, must not look to anything desirable or to desirability; it must not look to the benefit of him on whom it is imposed.

8. The meaning of this fable or myth is, that while the preceding Cardinal Virtues are born out of a union with Reason as it is in itself, Humility is generated out of a union with Reason insofar as Reason concerns us, the ones whom the task or office binds. However, what it is, and what it is in itself, are already prior to what it is when it is subordinated to other things. Thus, the former union is prior to the latter union, and what is begotten out of the former is prior to what is begotten out of the latter.

9. Another reason for the same is stated here,* namely, that while the other virtues are closely involved with their object (that is, concerned *with something*), humility is concerned with its subject (that is, concerned *in something*). For Diligence is listening to Reason, Obedience is the exercise of Reason, and Justice is the proportioning of Reason (and notice how these are concerned with Reason as the object of virtue, as what we must embrace with that love that constitutes virtue); but Humility is an indifference to oneself. And notice that Humility is concerned with the subject of Virtue, with the person in whom there is virtue: therefore, since the object is prior to the subject (as the very meaning of those names implies), it also follows that the other virtues are prior to Humility.

10. Another consideration is involved, according to which humility is prior to diligence; namely, that only a humble man can truly listen to the dictate of Reason. For how will he listen to what Reason says if he listens only to what he himself says, that is, to what concerns his convenience and pleasure? Hence, it is assuredly the case that perfect and complete diligence presupposes humility, or a carelessness of oneself; for the old Dutch saying, *We can listen to two people singing at once, but not two people talking at once*, applies here as well.†

* Viz., in the explanation that follows both here and in the main text.

† A Dutch saying *Men kan wel tegelijk zingen, maar niet tegelijk praten* ('It is possible to sing together at the same time, but not to talk'), is included in Jan Meulendijks and Bart Schuil, *Spreekwoordelijk Nederlands. Ruim 20.000 bekende en minder bekende gezegden, spreekwoorden en uitdrukkingen*, Baarn: Tirion, 1998, 583.

Since we cannot listen to ourselves and Reason at the same time, if we want to hear what Reason says we must ignore the other voice, and give ourselves over wholly to Reason.

11. The whole of the argument contained in paragraph 2 parallels what was said about Justice in paragraph 1 of the preceding subsection, where similar considerations concerning the priority and posteriority of virtues were raised.

12. Paragraph 2 does not so much keep us occupied with mere frivolity or cursory triviality as with a certain careful and charming consideration (such as is customarily afforded by fables) of quite a serious matter, a consideration under which we have seen how that close-fitting chain joins and binds fast the cardinal virtues in such a way that you may never have one without another; and in fact, that depending on how they are considered any of them may be prior to any other. For even though according to the first and simplest consideration of the kind implied by what I have said there may be such an order among the virtues, there are still other good and valid considerations under which the virtues may be ordered in some other way. Hence they are rightly considered to be sisters, for here they are, locked in a close embrace of goodwill, rejoicing more over each other's advantage than their own, each of them so far from taking it ill that another should be preferred to herself that she longs for the same even to excess, and seems to desire nothing else. Thus does this whole fable (whose mythology I have now fully unveiled) everywhere breathe noble and dear delights.

The Argument of § 1

Humility is carelessness of oneself; not in a positive sense, but (as I employ the words) in a negative sense. Hence, humility is better described as carelessness and neglect of oneself than as disregard of oneself, because the latter signifies something positive, unless you are aware of my usage, while the former signifies something negative. This covers paragraph 1.

Humility is born out of Virtue; for it is impossible that anyone should neglect himself unless led to such neglect by love of Reason, that is, divine law.

The Appendix features a contest about priority, or rather, a debate in which we enquire variously into which of the cardinal virtues is prior, and which is posterior. This debate is grounded in the fact

that depending on how they are considered each of them may be prior and posterior to any other. This covers paragraph 2.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself.

1. In this inspection the first thing we have to do is to dismiss everything that is not ours; for otherwise we would be inspecting not purely ourselves, but also other things, that is, things belonging to someone else. Having dismissed those things from our attention, we shall as a result at last come to see that nothing is ours beyond *to be conscious* and *to will*. Whatever is beyond these (such as the world and its parts, our bodies, and their motions) belongs to someone else, we have no rights over it, and, in a word, it is not ours. This will be explained fully in what follows in the text.

2. Of course, the whole world is briefly described here; but described, I should say, insofar as it impresses itself upon our senses (for what this same world is in itself belongs elsewhere, and I mean in particular in *Physics*). We see then that the world as it affects our senses can be conveniently divided into regions, and the inhabitants of those regions. The first region is that vast sky stretched out above us like a vault; and the inhabitants of this region are the stars, the Sun and the Moon being the most prominent among them. The second region is the air, which lies between the sky and our bodies: its inhabitants are clouds, and the phenomena they produce, such as the rainbow, the parhelion, and the strange colours visible just before sunrise and sunset; not to mention other meteors, such as thunderbolts, flashes of lightning, and thunderclaps. The third region is the sea, whose inhabitants are fish, or species that swim in the sea. The fourth region is the land, of which there are two sub-regions: the upper, whose inhabitants are plants and animals, or species confined to the land, species walking over it, burrowing through it, and flying a little above it; and the lower sub-region, whose inhabitants are metals, stones, and every kind of mineral.

3. For I do not know the full extent of these regions: how high that vast sky stretches, how widespread are the land and sea. Accordingly, I am less sure that I see the world than some part of the world. I understand all too well that there are many things above and below me which are beyond the reach of my senses and thoughts. Therefore, as a precaution lest in the course of inspecting myself I might delude myself about some of these things, I append this qualification: *I see the world, or at least a part of it.*

4. This poses no difficulty. No-one is so mad as to describe himself as the maker of any of these things; and if anyone were so stupid as to ascribe them to himself, he would do so only with his lips, not with his mind. God has made consciousness of this fact so open and clear that it cannot be abolished or obscured by any stupidity of ours. We all acknowledge with one voice: we did not make these things, we came upon them all here, and we shall in due course leave them behind here.

5. Thus, my body is defined as the occasion of my perceiving other bodies in the world, without whose intervention I would not perceive any other bodies. If I lacked eyes, I would not see those other bodies: therefore, if I entirely lacked a body, neither would I be able to see those other bodies; and the same can be said in respect of my ears and my other sense-organs. However, while *my body* is a part of the world, an inhabitant of the fourth region, and claims a place among the species who walk over it, *I*, as one who escapes all the senses, and who himself can neither be seen, heard, nor touched, am by no means a part of the world. These senses all have their seat in my body, and nothing can pass from them into me. I elude every appearance: I am without colour, shape, or size, I have neither length nor breadth, for all these qualities belong to my body. I am defined by consciousness and will alone. All this will become clearer from what will presently emerge in the course of inspecting myself.

6. Nor does this pose any difficulty. No-one in this case either is so insane as to claim anything here for himself. Everyone freely admits that though he might have given occasion for the generation of another human body, or could give it, the generation or making of such a body did not involve him.

7. Consequently, we should reprehend that crude expression, according to which someone who has begotten offspring is said to have “made” a child or children. This is, as I said, a crude way of speaking, and usually (I admit) uttered only in derision. All the same, it should be avoided, as the phrase considered in itself sounds like impiety, and ultimately ascribes to some ruffian or other what is proper to God. Since a man who generates a human body does not know how it is made, and knows still less about the innumerable organs of the body that one after another are even now being discovered every day by anatomists, he cannot without the height of impudence I do not say ascribe to himself the construction and

making of such a body, but even abuse such a phrase and manner of speech by saying that when he has merely made an effort in the matter of his children, he has made them. Furthermore, anyone who expresses himself in this way claims to be the maker not only of a human body (which itself is the height of impiety), but of a whole and complete man, and therefore ascribes to himself the making of a human mind. Therefore, the phrase is reprehensible, and those who are given to making use of it fail to grasp just how reprehensible it is. There is danger in bad speech, even if you do not *think* badly: it is easy to pass from ill words to ill thoughts, as I have noted in paragraph 3 of § 3 on Justice, where it is said: “But we shall have to put up with these abuses of language” etc.*

8. Things that I rejected in paragraphs 2 and 3 as alien to us, namely, the construction of this world and its parts, and consequently of our body (which is itself a part of the world, as I noted a little earlier), and which anyone who has recognised them as alien easily allows are withheld from him, pose no difficulty. But now we encounter some kind of heavy curtain, which hinders us from completely inspecting ourselves, but which we still cling to by the skin of our teeth, and rightly or wrongly claim for ourselves: I mean, the motion of our body and its organs. We are so used to ascribing this to ourselves that we seem not to doubt for a moment that it is our work; and accordingly, anyone who says otherwise is greeted with derision. Until, that is, true philosophy renders ridiculous not him who said it, but ourselves, carried away and deluded by that stupid belief, ridiculous in our own eyes. And that is how it goes: we liberally (and I do not know with what kind of innate arrogance) mingle ourselves with the works of God. For since He makes the world through motion (as I show conclusively in my *Physics*),[†] we too want to do so when we maintain that we are able to move this little body of ours.

* A reference to Treatise I, Chapter II, Section I, § 3, [3], 27, above: “These verbal abuses would be tolerable if . . .”.

[†] Geulincx’ writings on physics deal extensively with the Cartesian idea that the physical universe may be explained on the hypothesis that God initially imparted motion to a world of undifferentiated matter. Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Physica Vera*, esp. Treatise IV, “De Hypothesibus Physicis”, as well as the *Disputationes Physicae, Opera* II, 422–427 and 489 ff., respectively.

9. It is perfectly evident, and nothing can be thought more clearly than that what I do not know how to do is not my action.⁸ Nor is there any need for arguments here, only anyone's consciousness. But because deluded men rarely turn away from their senses and towards their consciousness, they have to be led to it as it were indirectly by means of arguments. I say, therefore, that if you are willing to describe yourself as the doer of anything that you do not know how to do, there is no reason why you should not believe that you have done or do anything that happens or has been done. If you do not know how motion is made in the organs of your body while being nevertheless quite sure that you made it, you could say with equal justification that you are the author of Homer's *Iliad*, or that you

⁸ Some have objected to the said principle, that it is often the case that we do not know how something is done, or could be done; such as that we do not know how iron is attracted to a magnet, and yet it is attracted to it. This is a ridiculous objection; for I have not claimed that *what you do not know how to do does not happen*, but: *what you do not know how to do is not your action*; from which it follows at once that we do not cause the motion of iron towards a magnet, but not that it does not happen.—Others have objected: *If I do not know how it is done, then it is not my action*, according to you; therefore, *if I know how it is done, then it is my action*. And this is even more ridiculous; for a good physician, for example, may know how some natural effect happens, which, however, not he himself but nature causes; and a good painter may know how a certain picture may be executed, which, however, not he himself but someone else will paint. This objection is no less inept than the preceding one, and manifestly contains the fallacy of the Antecedent, as Logicians term it. It is as if you were to argue thus: *if it is not moved, it does not hasten; therefore, if it is moved, it hastens*. Instead, one should argue thus (as Logicians demonstrate): *if it is not moved, it does not hasten; therefore, if it hastens, it is moved*; and likewise: *if I do not know how to do it, then it is not my action; therefore, if it is my action, then I know how to do it*.—Others have objected that there are many things in our actions of whose mode we are ignorant; for there are countless modes, countless respects, dispositions, and arrangements in whatever is done by which it can affect other things; countless modes in which it is related to other things. But neither is this objection (although by no means a sophistry like the preceding ones) any more convincing than the preceding ones; for one may easily respond that because we do not know about every mode of what we do, not every mode is our action; we have only so much of an effect as we know about, and no more. For example, suppose someone ignorant of syllogistic figuration makes a syllogism; since he does not know about the mode, it merely accompanies his action, and falls into the effect, it has not been imposed by him on the effect; for who could impose on it something that he was not cognisant of? And so it is in everyday life, when we happen to have said something in which there was some offence, though unaware of the mode in which what we say is offensive, we do not cause offence; and we all understand that the assistants of Architects, even though they may construct parts of the building, do not properly speaking cause the building itself, because they remain ignorant of the mode of the building (which is in the mind and idea of the Architect); and so on.

built the walls of Nineveh, or the Pyramids; you could say with equal justification that you make the Sun rise and set for us all, and the succession of days and nights, and of winter and summer. Why are these not your actions, why are you conscious that they are not your actions, if not because you do not know how to do them? This is the first thing we usually say when we want to convince others most forcefully that we have not done something: *I do not understand how it is done, I do not know how to do it*. And similarly, you do not know how motion can be communicated to your organs. When you will something, you are conscious that it is not up to you, but to another. Moreover, nothing could obscure from us the truth of the axiom that I have just stated, if we did not labour under the prejudice that we acquired in infancy, and which the various Schools of Philosophy have confirmed and solidified. I mean, our conviction that natural things act without knowing what they do and how they do it: for example, that the Sun illuminates we interpret as making light; that fire heats up we similarly interpret as making heat; that heavy things fall, we interpret as causing their own descent and downward motion; and all without knowing what they do and how they do it. But this is just our blatant stupidity. Since we readily concede that those things we do not know how to do are beyond our power (except in that one case of the motion of our organs), it is remarkable that we do not apply the same argument to these brute things. However, those who have been initiated into true philosophy have learned with complete conviction that it is not the Sun that makes light, nor fire that makes heat, nor heavy bodies that cause their own descent, but that it is a Mover who produces all these things locally and without an intermediary, by impressing various motions on this or that part of matter, and with these different motions and without anything else intervening forms those various bodies (the sun, fire, stones, etc.) and produces that great variety of effects for our senses, using both these motions and the various parts of matter on which He impresses them as if they were His instruments.* For even though we see clearly enough that someone who does not know what he does and how he does it is not the doer of it, we also clearly see that an instrument of a maker can also be something that by nature cannot understand what is done by itself or how it is done. Thus,

* On Geulincx' physics, see the note to page 224, above.

we may wonder at the impudence (if I may say so) of the Scholastics, who enlisted natural things as efficient causes, when to account them as mere instruments was enough to save the phenomena, that is, the appearances of nature (which is the task of the philosopher); but we should not wonder that with these fictions they deliberately rendered obscure from themselves the God whom this principle: *What you do not know how to do, is not your action*, immediately makes manifest.*

10. Without knowledge or consciousness we have to search out how motion flows from the brain through the nerves into our organs. We have gained knowledge of this only through experience, chiefly that of Apoplectics and Paralytics. In Apoplectics, that is, in all those in whom the brain is so seriously affected that the channel stretching from its recesses into the nerves has become obstructed, we see that motion is suppressed internally, with respiration surviving only to the extent of its dependence on the beating of the heart. Similarly, in Paralytics, that is, in those who are unable to move some limb of their body, such as the hand, Physicians have observed some blocked channel, or obstructed or compressed nerve, which served as the entrance for the inflow into the member, namely, the hand. Everything that I have just instanced rests on experience, and on nothing else. But since experience is necessarily posterior to the event experienced, the event with which it is concerned, and presupposes that it has already been accomplished, experience cannot be directed to influence it. Therefore, experience is not the kind of knowledge that serves for making the event happen, but serves at most for the imitation and reproduction of a similar event. Since, then, we can have only experience, and little enough of that, of how motion is distributed in our body (that is, by descending from the brain into the nerves, and through the nerves into our limbs and muscles), our knowledge cannot make us into movers, that is, such knowledge is not sufficient to make someone who is endowed with this knowledge alone the author of motion.

11. Physicians and Anatomists teach that motion ascends from our heart through the carotid arteries up to the brain. For that source of heat which is in the heart agitates the blood of the heart, and causes it as it were to bubble up. And the parts of this blood that are more solid and more apt for motion, and minutely divided

* *Quod nescis quomodo fiat, non facis*: Geulincx' so-called 'axiom of metaphysics'.

and most quickly moved, ascend through their vessels up to the brain, where, driven through pores into every part of the brain, they are called *spirits*.^{*} These spirits, conveyed through all the nerves that extend from the brain, communicate motion to our limbs, which these nerves are connected to at their other extremity. But whatever kind of knowledge this is (and certainly we perceive well enough that it is imperfect, and hardly differs from opinions and conjectures), it is derived wholly from experience, and indeed is at most so derived; and experience, as I noted a little earlier, is the knowledge not of an author but of a contemplator of an event.

And consequently, I have learned nothing at all about the motion of my body and the mode of that motion; or if I have learned something, I have learned it not, as they say, *a priori*, but *a posteriori*, and knowledge governing that motion is posterior to the motion itself, and no more than a consciousness and perception of the fact that motion is taking place. If I wish to use this knowledge of mine as a guide to the motion in my body, then, so far from helping me with that, it throws obstacles in front of me. For if curiosity possesses me to learn how many motions take place in my body when I am minded to utter only a single little syllable, and with the aid of Anatomy I represent to myself all the nerves, tendons, and muscles which must transmit through their vessels the animal spirits in the tongue, lips, and cheeks, as well as in the abdomen and lungs, and by expanding and contracting admit air into the lungs and expel it therefrom, or in some other way move it; and all this in order that the tongue may murmur but a single little syllable; why, it will be a twelvemonth before I shall have examined all the organs of mine necessary for this little task! When, therefore, shall I at last be ready for the task itself, in which I know that I am indeed less experienced?

* Note that the term '[animal] spirits' refers to a nervous fluid regulating muscular action. Descartes expressly argued that there was nothing mentalistic about 'these very fine parts of the blood,' which had 'no property other than that of being extremely small bodies which move very quickly, like the jets of a flame that come from a torch.' René Descartes, *Les Passions de l'Âme* I, 10 and 47, AT XI, 334–335 and 365. Translation from CSM I, 333–334. Cf. idem, 346. Cartesian physiology gained popularity in Leiden especially upon Florentius Schuyf's publication of Descartes' *Traité de l'homme* as *Renatus des Cartes De Homine Figuris et Latinitate Donatus a Florentio Schuyf*, Leiden: Franciscus Monardus and Petrus Leffen, 1662 and Leiden: Hackiana, 1664.

12. As we have seen, only experience establishes—and it certainly establishes little else—how and where motion is distributed in our body. And this experience does not help us to move our limbs, for it presupposes such motion and is posterior to it, as we noted just now; and if indeed we want in turn to use that kind of experience to control the motion of our body, so far from helping us it will make matters worse, and plainly render us feeble and ineffective in executing motion, as I have demonstrated at somewhat greater length in the Dutch version of this Treatise.*

13. Suppose, for example, someone has retired to bed in the evening in the best of health. During the night, as he sleeps, a catarrh affects a nerve of his arm, which is thereby rendered paralysed. When he wakes up in the morning, not knowing what has happened, he immediately sets about getting dressed, and wants, as usual to pick up his shirt; but, to his astonishment and stupefaction, his hand, instead of reaching out for the shirt, as it has always done before, lies limply on the bed, and cannot be moved from one position to another except by his other hand. This paralytic quite clearly feels, and is conscious that, when he wanted to pick up his shirt he was doing the same as at other times when he would indeed pick up his shirt; and in consequence realises that the picking up of the shirt itself, that is, the motion of his hand, has never proceeded from him, but from someone else, who has executed that motion in response to his will.

14. The argument that I adumbrated just now, that it is denied to us to be the authors of motion, is the second one. For the first argument was that since we do not know how to make motion in our organs, we do not make it. There is now another argument, namely, that motion is determined and limited independently of us with respect to both time and space. With respect to time, as is proved by the case of the paralytic that I mentioned a little earlier (for at a certain time he lacks motion in his arm, and lacks it independently of the paralytic himself, in fact against his will); and with

* Cf. Arnout Geulincx, *Van de Hoofd-deuchden: De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667/*Van de Hoofd-deuchden: De Eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, ed. J.P.N. Land, Antwerpen – Gent – 's Gravenhage: Buschmann – Hoste – Nyhoff, 1895, 93–96/*Arnout Geulincx, Van de hoofddeugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, *Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland* 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 92–93.

respect to space, as will be stated in paragraph 7, for in that paragraph I complete the argument that I only began in this one.* Therefore, the first rule of Reason that denies motion to us is: *Do not say that you do what you do not know how to do.* The second rule is: *Know that you have no right over what is determined by the will of another.* Accordingly, motion is often absent when we will it (as in paralysis), and often present when we do not will it (as in epileptic fits). Motion therefore persists and decays by the action of an author other than myself.

15. That is, I do not make it. For a long time, the wisest among the Scholastics have freely admitted that we cause nothing outside us, other than by combination and separation. A painter has made a picture: what has he done other than to join together certain powders (called colours) that were formerly separate, and fix them, smeared with oil and applied with a brush, to a canvas? A sculptor has made a statue: but this is nothing other than to chisel away certain parts of a block; when these parts have been chiselled away, there now emerges something that was already in the wood, namely, a Herm, as it is called. And that is how it is with other fabrications of human art, such as clothing, houses, and boats. We either confer motion on these things or we confer nothing: that we do not confer motion is clear from what has been said earlier; therefore, we confer nothing on them; they are absolutely the works of another. But someone may say: if so, why are some people painters, while others are ignorant of painting? Why are some people architects or shipwrights, while others certainly are not? For no-one among us makes pictures, or houses, or boats, and other things of that kind. The answer is simple. They who have this or that art have it as patterns of certain works in their mind, and desire the motions that are necessary to the composition of those works. To these persons, when they will them, those motions are granted. And accordingly they are, and are said to be, artists; and on account of their art certain works, of which they are in this sense the authors, are ascribed to them, even though they do not touch the work itself (say a picture or statue) as it is in itself. But others do not have such patterns and such images in their mind, and are ignorant of the notions required to realise those patterns, and so are by no means to be

* Cf. Annotation 18, below.

considered worthy of the name of artists. Some, therefore, are artists, while others are not, even though neither the former nor the latter produce anything outside themselves in the world; as I have already demonstrated.

16. You have the example, near the end of paragraph 4, of the paralytic.* He acts as though his action extended beyond him (he wants his hand to be moved, and to take hold of his shirt, so that he may put it on), and yet his trouble is in vain, even though he devotes himself to it insofar as is, for his part, sufficient for motion to be made, and devotes all that he was wont to devote to it at other times, when upon his willing it motion was granted to his hand.

17. Strictly speaking, my action does not flow outside me; the whole of it always stays and stops with me; but because with my action, for example, willing to speak or wrestle, God in an ineffable manner conjoins certain motions, whether of tongue, or hands and feet, within this little body of mine, the action of my will, when these motions follow or accompany it, seems in a certain tropical or figurative way of speaking to extend outside me, and to be diffused into my body and its organs, the tongue, hands, and feet. However, the action itself is not really diffused; for the action that is received into my body is not mine but the mover's; as is tellingly pointed out in paragraph 6 in these words: *Thus, I have no part in this, and its force is due not to my action, but to His.* And below in paragraph 14, articles 3 and 4: *Owing to Divine power, my actions are sometimes diffused outside me; but to that extent they are not my actions but God's.*

18. Here we touch on the second part of the second argument, on which I made a note to paragraph 4 above, near the end, namely, things that relate to the limitation of motion; and just as we there considered the limitation of motion with respect to time (for motion sometimes accompanies our will, and sometimes does not, as we saw there), so we consider it here with respect to space. Whatever motion is granted to us is restricted to a small region of space: in the sky we move nothing, likewise in the air, apart from the dense and cloudy air with which we are surrounded on the earth; we move something on the earth, perhaps, though even then only on its surface, and something in the sea, but so little that we can hardly claim

* See also Annotation 13, above.

to move it at all. Therefore, just as the whole of motion is denied to us as authors, so only a tiny amount is allowed to us as users.

19. Neither is this in all strictness true. I am in command of nothing here, nor does the motion in my limbs follow my will; rather, it accompanies my will. Accordingly, I say, these feet are not moved because I wish to go on my way, but because another wishes what I wish. It is just like a baby laid in his cradle: if he wishes the cradle to rock it sometimes rocks, though not because he wishes it, but because his mother or nurse, sitting beside it, wills it, and because she (in a certain manner of speaking) can fulfil it and also wishes to fulfil what he wishes. See below in § 5, paragraph 2. Furthermore, my will does not move the Mover to move my limbs; rather, He who imparts motion to matter and has given laws to it is the same one who has formed my will, and yoked together these diverse things (the motion of matter and the decision of my will) in such a way that when my will wishes, such motion as it wishes appears; and on the other hand when motion appears my will wishes it, without either causing or influencing the other. It is the same as if two clocks agree precisely with each other and with the daily course of the Sun: when one chimes and tells the hours, the other also chimes and likewise indicates the hour; and all that without any causality in the sense of one having a causal effect on the other, but rather on account of mere dependence, inasmuch as both of them have been constructed with the same art and similar industry.* So, for example, motion of the tongue accompanies our will to speak, and this will accompanies the motion, without either the latter depending on the former, or the former depending on the latter, but rather both depending on that same supreme artificer who has joined and yoked them together so ineffably.

* In a postscript to his letter of 13 January 1696 to Henri Basnage de Beauval, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz would famously use a similar image to explain his notion of the “harmonie pré-établie” of body and soul. Cf. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Die philosophische Schriften*, ed. Carl Immanuel Gerhardt, vol. 4, Berlin: Weidmann, 1880/reprint Hildesheim: Olms, 1960, 498–500. In 1884, the German historian Edmund Pfeiderer (1842–1902) argued that Leibniz must have become aware of the clock comparison independently of Geulincx. Cf. Edmund Pfeiderer, *Leibniz und Geulincx: Mit besonderer Beziehung auf ihr beiderseitiges Uhrengleichmiss*, Tübingen: Tübinger Universitäts-Schriften, 1884. Although the implications of the allusion are yet to be adequately explored by critics, Beckett seems to allude to this image in *Molloy*, where Molloy and Moran hear and comment upon what is probably the same bell sounding, in their separate narratives.

20. What one should think of that command, I have already sufficiently spoken of in the Annotations just above. But in any case, it is certain that nothing is moved by the decision of my will unless it is bound together with my body in some way. For instance, once a stone has parted company with my body it will not move back and forth however much I will it; nor will a ball or an arrow, once it has left my hand or bow, be directed anywhere else than to where it was fired, even though the one who has flung and fired it may want its path to be determined elsewhere, displaying this by means of shouts and gestures (something that in sportsmen is as frequent as it is ridiculous).

21. It should be thoroughly instilled into them, lest men become accustomed to intrude themselves into the works of God, or claim to be the authors of something of which God alone is the author. For it falls to God alone to make the world and all its parts; and even though the Scholastics affirm that the things which they say are *done by art* are also done by us, such as houses, towers, and statues, they do not, however, admit them to be parts of the world, although art, in the sense of the pattern and will of an artificer, has some role in devising them. But since they really are parts of the world, they belong only to Him who is the author of the world. The will and pattern of an artificer, and whatever else may be seen to go with the art that is practised, all remain with the same artificer, and cannot pass out of him into the work unless they are led forth by the divine hand; and inasmuch as they are so led forth, they belong not to the artificer but to God, that is, to the author of the world.

22. All activity regarding things of the world is withheld from us; speculation alone is left; and how it must itself be circumscribed in order that it may be ours, we shall see in what follows. There are, therefore, two parts to the human condition, namely, to act on something in the world, and to be acted upon by something. How much belongs to the former part was covered in the preceding, so that that whole part has practically been disposed of. For *to will* is all that is left to us, because that belongs not to the world but to ourselves. Thus, it is clear that while the whole action remains within us, it is sometimes led forth by divine virtue; but for that reason it is not our action, but the action of the one who leads it forth. As to the second part, whose turn it is now to be discussed, it consists wholly in Passion, whereby we are acted upon by parts of the world,

and through which consequently they act on us. We shall see that the action of parts of the world also remains within those parts, and can never touch us; and that while the motion of parts of the world is sometimes channelled into us, for that reason it does not belong to those parts of the world but to the one who channels it. Therefore, the one who sometimes leads out our action and infuses it into parts of the world is the one who likewise leads the action of those parts into us; but we neither act on those things, nor do those things act on us. Our action remains within us, and theirs within them; He, the one who leads those actions in and out, is the one who really acts, both on us and on them.

23. A brief recapitulation of what was said in paragraph 2, in which the four regions of the world, and the inhabitants of each, are touched upon. The intention there was to show us how much of, and how, our action can affect them; the intention now is to show us how much of, and how, their action can affect us.

24. Of course, they do not really have the qualities that I see in them, nor can they have such qualities as I see in them (as is amply demonstrated in my *Physics* and *Metaphysics*);* for the things placed outside us have nothing beyond extension and motion. Yet I see in them colours and light, sounds, and countless other likenesses and appearances, and I persuade myself, unjustifiably, that the things I see are such as I see them. But suppose they do have the qualities I see in them; what need is there for me to see them?² and the other questions that follow in the text.

25. What is said here of the eyes can be said, with appropriate changes, of the ears, the nose, and other sense-organs. But it is right to mention the eyes before the other senses, for it is chiefly through their participation that we inhabit the world. We experience by far the majority of the parts of the world with our eyes, and would know almost nothing of these things if we lacked the sense that has its seat in the eyes. Hence also, those who are blind from birth inhabit only a tiny part of the world in comparison with that vast region extended above us, over which our eyes daily rove, of which

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Introduction, Section 2, and the Annotation to p. 203; *Physica Vera*, Introduction and Annotations to p. 368; and *Annotata Latiore in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes*, esp. the commentary to Part I, articles 66–71; *Opera* II, 200–204 and 301–303; 368–369 and 450–451; and III, 405–418, respectively. See also: Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Introduction, Section 2, *Opera* II, 140–146/*Metaphysics*, 21–27.

the blind have learned nothing. And when we tell them about the Sun, the Moon, and the stars, and the vast heavens, and the clouds, and their phenomena and colours, we are just intoning empty names, signifying to them no more to any purpose than *sisimandrum*, *sipolendrum*, *sincaptis*, and the similar nonsense-words that the comic cook in Plautus flings around to season his dishes.*

26. Add: *nor that conformation*. For a conformation is nothing other than a certain shape in which the membranes and the fluids cohere and are bound together. But that a shape, either as fluids or membranes, does not see, is so obvious, so transparent to us from our consciousness, that nothing clearer can be thought.

27. The most excellent fruit of the Inspection of Oneself is that one correctly distinguishes oneself from one's body: everything else follows easily from this. Moreover, confusion of the notions of mind and body is the sure and certain source of all sin, all impiety, and Atheism. That distinction is here stressed succinctly and with the utmost clarity: namely, that membranes, fluids, and their conformation (and that is what the eye is) do not see. I indeed see: therefore, they and I are not the same.

28. I mean, I do not see what they in themselves contribute to the work of seeing. In fact, I see very clearly that in themselves and by their nature they bring nothing to the work of seeing. For membranes and fluids in any shape or form can contribute nothing more towards seeing than a stick or stone, if we speak of the things themselves. In other respects it is undeniable, and observable by our consciousness, that the eyes contribute to seeing, as is pointed out below in this same paragraph. Accordingly, the eyes contribute to seeing through the divine law and will, that is, God's good pleasure. Just because so many things that conduce to sustenance and pleasure can be bought and obtained with gold, it does not mean that gold has this power of itself, through its own force and energy. Whatever power it has here it has through the institutions, laws, and customs of men.

* Plautus, *Pseudolus*, Act 3, Scene 2, 828–836. In Paul Nixon's translation (*Plautus in Five Volumes*, vol. 4, Cambridge, Mass., and London: Harvard U.P. and William Heinemann, 1980, 235) the relevant passage reads: 'Why, when I have put a dash of cinnatopsis in the pans, or clovitopsis, or sageolio, or allspiceria, they heat up automatically and instantaneously. These are my seasonings for Neptune's cattle: terrestrial cattle I season with cassitopsis, pepitilis or capsicoria.' The neologisms of Plautus's cook are further explained in Emily Gowers, *The Loaded Table: Representations of Food in Roman Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993, 93–108, esp. 103–105.

29. It happens quite often in practice that while we know *that* something is, we are flatly ignorant of *how* it is; for the nature of ineffability consists in the latter. Something is said to be *ineffable* not because we cannot think or speak of it (for this would be *nothing*, *nothing* and *unthinkable* being the same, as all Schools of Philosophers have freely acknowledged), but because we cannot think about or encompass with our reason how it is done. And in this sense God is ineffable not only in Himself but in all His works. For example, I, as a man, am his work; I know that this work exists, in fact I know nothing so well as that this work exists; but the manner in which He made me a man and joined me to my body, so that I act on it and am acted on by it in the way that was explained a little earlier on, I do not understand; I understand only that I can never understand it. Similarly, God is also ineffable with respect to the foundation of the world, as I demonstrate in my *Metaphysics*.^{*} That there is motion in matter (and the world is constituted by motion), we clearly understand, and are as it were conscious of the thing; but how He imparts motion cannot be grasped by the human intellect. The same is true of the rest of God's works, for when they are thoroughly investigated, in the end an ineffable something is always missing. Therefore, as is stated in the text, it is quite inept to deny a reality because you cannot grasp how it works; and here the Sceptics, and those who are enormously and foolishly beset by doubt, who maintain either that motion does not exist, or perhaps that they are not affected even by their own body, because they do not know how motion happens and how it affects them, are very imperceptive. In bygone times there were many who thought like this, and quite a few even today. Impious one and all, they would deprive men of the first and greatest attribute of divinity, namely, ineffability, when, that is, they refuse to admit anything except what they can utter and think clearly, not only with respect to substance, but also to mode. More on this in Treatise II, when I come to Piety and Religion.[†]

30. Namely, that I am a man, that I act thus on this body, and that in turn I am thus acted upon. This, I say, I should not deny,

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 3, *Scientiae* 3, 4 and 5, *Opera* II, 188–191 and 286–291/*Metaphysics*, 97–105.

† For Geulincx' views on scepticism, see also: *Metaphysica Vera*, Introduction, Section 2, *Opera* II, 140–146/*Metaphysics*, 21–27.

even though I do not understand how these things happen; even though, I say, I do not understand how God diffuses my action outside me into my body, effuses the action, or rather the motion of my body outside my body, and infuses the motion of my body into me. I know that these things happen (we saw that very clearly in the preceding), but I do not now *how* they happen. They are beyond the grasp of any created mind; He alone who has made them happen understands them.

31. Here begins the third part of the Inspection, that is, what is comprised in our coming into the human condition, which we conventionally call our *birth*, or the first moment of our coming into the world, the first moment of our being united with a body, from which our later use of this body by acting upon it, and in turn being acted upon by it, will follow. Properly speaking, however, this third part begins with paragraph 12. And in this paragraph I set out a brief recapitulation of the first two parts of the Inspection of Ourselves, that is, of our action on our body and our body's action on us.

32. Of course, such likeness as there is in corporeal things can exist only as something impelled (as I demonstrate in my *Physics*, and further in my *Metaphysics*).* For in a corporeal thing, nothing can be, or be thought, beyond extension and motion: accordingly, what is impelled affects only my body; with me, who am a mind, it does not square, it can claim no right of residence (see this more amply discussed in the first part of my *Metaphysics*, or *Autology*, which is very relevant to the matter†).

33. What is present in this mode of my condition, I do not know; therefore, I am all the more ignorant of what was in the past; for in the order of reason present things are very clear to us, past things more obscure (though perhaps they were once very clear, they are subject to oblivion), and things to come very obscure. These are the degrees, this is the scale of the human intellect that consciousness itself reveals to our understanding. Since, therefore, we do not know in what way we are now subject to the human condition, how much less do we know of the time when we first became subject to it.

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Physica Vera*, *Opera* II, 368 ff. and the references in the footnote to page 234, above.

† Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, *Opera* II, 147–157 and 267–271/*Metaphysics*, 29–46.

34. You will say: perhaps an act of my will intervened, and I came here when it pleased me to be here, but I have forgotten, and no longer recollect that I did so knowingly and willingly, just as I have forgotten many similar things that I once did knowingly and willingly. And this seems to be the view of the ancients, who left us so many fables concerned with the river Lethe, and in particular, that when they who are to be born have drunk from it they immediately forget everything they did before their birth; and that they to whom it is granted to re-enter the world and join us in the upper air, are ordered to drink from it. I reply: away with these fables, which are often also the notions of learned men, sprung from them in an excessively puerile way, if I may be permitted to say so. In the first place, it is certain that I cannot release myself from the human condition merely by the exercise of my will. *For I cannot depart from my body merely by willing to depart from it; I am deeply conscious that I cannot do it.* Read what follows briefly on the matter in § 5, paragraph 2 of this Treatise. Hence, just as I cannot release myself from this body by the exercise of my will, neither can I involve myself in this condition by the exercise of my will. But perhaps a doubt comes over you, and you reply: perhaps I came into this condition by the exercise of my will, and was brought here willingly; but willingly or unwillingly, I must remain, and cannot free myself by the exercise of my will; just as fish enter willingly into a net, but once they have entered can in no way get out again. I reply: when I am unable by the exercise of my will to release myself from my body, I am not sensible of any difficulty, as if the way out were blocked or I were being kept chained hand and foot. On the contrary, I am very clearly sensible that, even though everything lies free and open, the deliverance I crave is not to be had, and that willingly or unwillingly I am held fast in this body by some superior force. Thus, it is the same force that now keeps me here which once brought me here.

35. Here begins the fourth part of the Inspection of Ourselves, which is concerned with death, that is, our departure from the human condition. With these four parts this Inspection of Ourselves is thus completed. That same condition of ours supplies two of the parts, namely, action and passion; birth and death, that is, our entry into and departure from the human condition, claim for themselves the two other parts.

36. We are conscious of nothing more keenly than that even if we cannot depart of our own accord (as we noted a little earlier),

we can, however, be taken away right now, and even as we say or hear such things as these; but generally we try to ignore that knowledge by preoccupying ourselves with sensory and external things. And it is remarkable how men wish to fend off not only death itself by every possible means, but even the consciousness of death, and as it were to flee from it and evade it. The following saying vividly depicts the mood of someone who is in such an excitable and distressed state: *I see that I can be taken away, either now or at some other time*. Why are men so fond of talking like this? Why do they insert that pointless alternative *either now or at some other time*? Certainly, such sayings suggest nothing other than that they wish not only to fend off death itself (which is not to be greatly wondered at), but even to keep it out of their very thoughts. Was it not enough to say this: *I see that I can be taken away now*? Why add that silly and feeble qualification *or at some other time*? This qualification should therefore be rejected with scorn in favour of the following phrase, *in fact, right now*.

37. Ignorant not of the thing itself but of its mode; for I am not ignorant of the human condition itself (inasmuch as, being a man, I so obviously experience it within myself), but of my mode of being in this condition I am most profoundly ignorant. Similarly, I am not ignorant of death itself, and when I die shall be even less ignorant; but of how I am going to be disjoined from my body I am as ignorant as I am of how I am joined with my body.

38. Of course, just as with wicked slaves and servants, who care more for the portion* entrusted to them by their master than for their master's command itself; and who, if they are called away by their master and ordered to do something else, mutter about it, do it with ill grace, and even against their master's will if they can, persist with what they were ordered to do first; proving thereby that they are not greatly moved by their master's orders. For if these moved them to begin and persist, they should also have moved them to leave off when their master called them away and ordered them to do something else. They are, accordingly, led by stupidity, and a certain stubbornness in acting, and by the diabolical instigation to persist with something once it has been started (for this is at the instigation of the Devil, as I shall show quite clearly in Treatise IV,

* The Latin word here is *pensum*, a word which Beckett uses frequently in *The Unnamable*.

in the subsection concerned with the Devil). They are therefore wicked servants, deservedly detestable, and hateful to their masters, who see themselves openly ignored by them. But let us all apply these things to ourselves when we resist and refuse to obey after God has advised and warned us by means of bodily disorders and enfeeblement that we must depart from the body, and prefer to persist stubbornly with that burden which he formerly imposed on us, rather than listening to Him when He calls us away and orders us to do something else; thus giving ourselves over to the Devil, and removing ourselves as far as possible from God.

39. Of course, the fact that He puts us here is as much as to say (as if God cannot otherwise speak through Reason): *Remain here until I decide otherwise.* Just as when a master orders his servant to guard the doors, the servant is not relieved of this office until he is called away by his master, so too the fact that we have been put here is as much as to say that we have been ordered to remain here until He who put us here calls us away and relieves us of that office.

40. This being said with some distaste. And I deserve it when I perceive in myself the wicked servility that I noted a little earlier at these words: *I prefer what He has ordered* [Annotation 38].* Here, therefore, we learn from the Inspection of Ourselves that we also are subject to sin, in fact subject to the Devil; for he is the instigator who continually inculcates into us this creed: *Continue, because you have begun* (and in Treatise IV we shall see that this is indeed the creed of the Devil), since something should not be continued because you have begun it but because Reason dictates it; and when something must not be continued, the better the start you have made the more strongly he inculcates it. But these things, and the like, will be explained at greater length in Treatise IV.

41. Or from the fact that I perceive in myself that wicked servility which I have already noted.

42. This perversity of the human mind, confusing and unsettling everything, and if it could bring this about, subjecting even God Himself to it, you may see partly described in § 10, [2] of this Section.

43. When motion is denied us, all action on external things is denied us, and so we can do nothing to things placed outside us.

* Viz., 'to adhere to the things my Master once ordered' rather than 'to what he orders now.' See the main text, page 36, above.

Hence, whatever perturbations we cause, they remain within us, they perturb and disorder ourselves alone.

44. We have learned by a kind of natural instinct that when the whole office of the human condition has been fulfilled, God will not apply us to any other office until we have rendered an account of what we have done in this office. Therefore, not without reason, when diseases and impending death warn us that we are about to depart, and we see that the account of our deeds stands badly, we are afraid. Not without reason, I say, we fear and tremble; but it is wicked and disgraceful that we take more account of our fear than of God as he orders us to depart, more account of our fear than of His command and law. This is why it is implied by the First Obligation that when God orders us to depart we must not be deterred from departing by the awareness of something ill done while we were here. For the law of God must have more force for us than our own welfare; otherwise we shall prefer ourselves to God, in which finally self-love and every kind of sin reach their apotheosis.

45. In the condition of a man; for I have not inspected myself here other than in the condition of a man, that is, as an incorporated mind, acting on a body and in turn being acted upon by a body. Acting, I mean, in the manner that I have explained, in case anyone might misunderstand this. And the Inspection of Myself as a mind independent of my body, is less relevant here than in my *Metaphysics*, where in its First Part I discussed the kind of inspection that I called *Autology*.^{*} Here we inspect ourselves with regard to the morals and precepts of the human condition, by which our virtues are nourished, but our vices rejected.

46. The demonstrations of Mathematicians have this peculiarity, that they are concerned with things subject to the imagination and the senses, chiefly figures. This is why the human intellect, which is thoroughly bound up with the senses, perceives better, retains more easily, and is more open to Mathematical demonstrations. But apart from this peculiarity, which for an intellect disposed rightly should have no importance, it emerges as most certain that the

^{*} Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, *Opera* II, 147–157 and 267–271/*Metaphysics*, 29–46. Beckett makes use of this word, which was coined by Geulincx, on a number of occasions, for example in *Murphy*, *The Unnamable*, and in a letter to Georges Duthuit of 1949 which is published in S.E. Gontarski and Anthony Uhlmann (eds.), *Beckett after Beckett*, Gainesville FL: University Press of Florida, 2006.

demonstrations that we discovered in the course of inspecting ourselves have far more force than those of Mathematics, being concerned with the things that are naturally best known to us, that is, ourselves and our thoughts, which are in themselves necessarily clearest of all to us, and only accidentally obscured by our prejudices; an obscurity easily dispelled by serious, acute, and frequent inspection of ourselves, and by self-communing.

47. For that diffusion of my action into corporeal things is, with respect to its beginning, middle, and end, a thing that at bottom is by nature indeterminate, vague, and contingent, which can take any type of course (for action can be diffused outside me and not diffused, as was shown in the preceding paragraph, and it can be diffused up to a certain point, further, or less far); and before such things can be set in motion and arranged within the natural order, they require a will to determine whether they are to be rather than not to be, or to be here rather than there, and so on. Therefore, all such things are necessarily dependent on the will of God.

48. Of course, the Earth itself and its motions are no less connected with and dependent on the command of my will than the tongue in my head and its motion. Therefore, the fact that my tongue moves when I will, but the Earth does not, is not up to me, but must be referred to someone else, namely, Him who made both of these clocks, the clock of my will and the clock of the world, and who accordingly willed, and so ordained and established that when the clock of my will sounds, the clock of my tongue will also sound, but not also the clock of the Earth. See the Annotation that I made to this analogy of a clock at greater length above.

49. So far, only the first part of the Inspection has been recapitulated, namely, the part dealing with the Action that I have on my body. And this part, when we philosophise rightly, is wholly denied to us, and rendered unto God, to whom it is due. So far as this part is concerned, only *to will* is reserved to us, and *to will* does not extend to our body. Now follows the second part, which deals with Passion.

50. In itself the world is invisible; for my body receives nothing but motion; and the relative motion of bodies (for instance, between other bodies and mine) has naturally no propensity in itself to arouse in me, who am a mind, thought or any mode of thinking. For more on this argument see that Part of my *Metaphysics* entitled *Autology*.

51. The Pagan Philosophers, and the Scholastics who have followed them indiscriminately, reducing man everywhere to the order of

nature, and making him the kin of sheep and cattle, are reprehensible; since it has now been made very clear to us by the foregoing Inspection that man by no means belongs to the natural order, to the world, and to its parts, but that his condition must be referred absolutely to the order of miracles.

52. Add, or rather preface: *that I came upon this scene unconscious, ignorant, and unwilling*; in case, I mean, the third part of the Inspection (which is concerned with my birth) should seem to have been left out. And the fourth part of the human condition, that is, death, or departure from this condition, begins in this tenth article.

53. The human condition, as I have frequently said, has two parts, action and passion. Action begins with us, and is originally within us, in fact is ours; but it ends in the body, and when it finally gets outside us is by no means ours but God's. But our passion (which is the action of other things on us) begins from things placed outside us, and originally is not ours; but it ends in us, and is finally within us, and is ours.

The Argument of § 2

It is as if the human condition has four parts: firstly, the action with which we move our body, and with our body as an intermediary, other bodies; secondly, the passion with which we receive an image of parts of the world when we apply our sight, our hearing, and our other senses to them; as the third part, there is our birth, or our first coming into this state and condition; the fourth part being death, or our departure from this condition.

And we learn by inspecting ourselves that we can do nothing about any part of the human condition, we have no power, and no rights over it; that it is all down to someone else's power.

For as regards the first part: we have no power to affect either our own or any other body; this is perfectly obvious from our consciousness alone, and no sane man would deny it. This covers paragraphs 2 and 3.

Nor do we move even our own body; we do not know how to move it, and if we did know, that knowledge would contribute nothing towards moving it. This covers paragraph 4.

Much less do we move other bodies. This covers paragraph 5.

From this it follows that we can do nothing outside ourselves; for if we did anything outside ourselves, it would have to happen through motion. This covers paragraph 6.

However, motion often follows, or is connected with, the command of our will; but with someone else taking charge of that connection, and also determining it. This covers paragraph 7.

As regards the second part: things placed outside us cannot impress their likeness on me; nor can I myself capture that likeness of my own accord; for such things impinge upon or affect at most my body, and this is as much to say that it does nothing of itself towards perceiving them. This covers paragraphs 8 and 9.

Hence also, there must be someone else who can by His own power impress on me the likeness of the world; just as He impresses my action on small parts of the world; and in each case in an ineffable manner, which perpetually eludes me when I try to grasp it. This covers paragraphs 10 and 11.

As regards the third part: so far from coming here willingly, so far from coming here under my own power, I do not even know *how* I came here. This covers paragraph 12.

As regards the fourth part: likewise unwillingly, but also reluctantly; in this I recognise my own wickedness and folly, departing reluctantly because I must depart, and desiring to have power over something where I know I have no power. This covers paragraph 13.

In paragraph 14 I set forth a brief capitulation of all this, digested into twelve articles.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 3. Disregard of Oneself.

1. We see from the preceding Section that we have no power over the human condition; we see that we have no power, I mean, because we see quite clearly that we are profoundly ignorant of the mode of this condition and all its parts. This gives rise to the chief axiom of Ethics (for what is contained in the preceding § 2 is all concerned with Physics or Metaphysics, it is theoretical, not practical): *Wherein you have no power, therein neither should you will,*⁹ or what

⁹ Note that this axiom includes both parts of humility, I mean, inspection and disregard. *Wherein you have no power*; we read in this the inspection of oneself (for by this inspection of ourselves we learn with perfect clarity that we have absolutely no power over our human condition and its individual parts, that is, we cannot contribute anything with regard to these things; whether they are this way, or that, or not at all). *Therein you should not will*; we read in this the other part of humility, that is, disregard of oneself, or neglect of oneself across the whole human condition, and resigning ourselves into the power of His hand, in which we are, indeed, whether we like it or not.

comes to the same thing, *Do nothing gratuitously, do nothing in vain*. In practical matters no clearer principle than this can be imagined; no one who would wish to reject it can be anything but extremely stupid, and we customarily call men stupid when we see them doing or attempting something which they could easily see was in vain. Therefore, to will nothing concerning our condition, to leave the whole thing to Him in whose power it really is, this truly is to disregard oneself, this is to build virtue on the unshakeable foundation of humility.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation.

1. The first Obligation and the first disregard of ourselves fit together with the final inspection of ourselves; so that disregard begins where inspection leaves off. For the final part of the inspection was concerned with our death, and the first part of disregard is concerned with the same thing. It is also right to submit this to disregard first because it is the hardest to bear: while we are merely ignorant and unwilling with respect to the other parts of the human condition, of this part we have an active dislike.

2. A quite common pretext that they regularly offer in extenuation of their wickedness and disobedience is: *I would not shrink from death itself if I could square it with my conscience*; inasmuch as under this pretext they give the appearance of still struggling with their obligations. But when we examine the matter carefully, it is nothing but a pretext cloaking the wickedness of a mind that rejects divine law. Surely, this should not cause anyone to hesitate. If a servant who has failed in his duty to his master attends promptly and quickly when his master calls him to account, and with no intervening delay, and also dismisses those servants who in the course of going there confront him with the just anger of the master, he brings it home to them that for him to wish to obey his master's command when his master calls him, is enough, even if, as he deserves, he is to get a beating; then, surely, if the master sees, through a window perhaps, the servant in question behaving like this as he attends, will he not remit the servant's offence, and receive him back into his good graces? If a human master, being generous and cordial, would behave like this in such circumstances, what should we not conclude concerning the divine Master who alone is our master in the true and proper sense? We have gravely violated His law, and in a myriad of ways; now He summons us to his presence, and orders us

out of our body, orders us to die. Let consciousness of our evil deeds not detain us; let us come all the more promptly, and by how much less we obeyed His law formerly, by so much more let us obey it now. For if we were formerly less than obedient to His law, now it must be obeyed for certain. This time we shall not get another chance to obey, at least in the same, that is, human condition.

3. With a truly virtuous man there is no delay when he is summoned by his God. He holds it to be of no importance whether he is to get a beating or not; he has learned that it is a matter not for him, but for his master, and that wherein he has no power, therein neither does he will. To punish and reward are for God, not for us; it is for us to put up with whatever He will do. If we do otherwise we manifestly fall away from the second part of humility, we fall into care of ourselves, into self-love.

4. There is great wickedness in this evasion, and I do not know whether it is not greater even than self-destruction. For which of the servants is more gravely delinquent, he who comes unsummoned, or he who does not come when he is summoned? You may perhaps say that the latter has sinned more gravely; and rightly, it would appear. As for the former kind of wickedness, Christians indeed rightly execrate it, and their magistrates inflict public infamy on the corpses of suicides; but they do not seem to give enough weight to the offence of evading death, and desiring a long life. It is indeed common for most of us to die reluctantly, but that does not make it any less wicked: a multiplicity of sinners does not make sins lighter, but rather aggravates them, if anything.

5. One should understand this as an intention, not a prediction: I intend from the bottom of my heart that I will not give up the ghost out of disgust with life and the miseries of man's lot; but what I am actually going either to do or not do, God alone knows.

6. The suggestion here is that to obey this Obligation it is sufficient to have a mind firmly inclined, and a firm intention to come when God calls; and that there is no requirement for the pleasure and facility which we usually feel when our passions conspire with the inclination of our mind and have a propensity for the very same thing towards which the intentions of our mind are going. For the most part here the passions resist; but that conflict does not interfere in any way with the inclination of our mind if it holds this firmly enough: to obey God, however difficult and calamitous it may seem.

The Argument of § 4

The axiom, *Wherein I have no power, therein I do not will*, embraces both parts of Humility: *I have no power* denotes Inspection of Oneself, *I do not will* denotes Disregard of Oneself. But I have no power over death, that is, my departure from the world; I can neither defer nor delay it (than which nothing is more evident to me through my consciousness, nothing more certain than my daily experience of the deaths of others); therefore I shall will nothing here. I cannot defer death, not even on account of consciousness of my sins; for this would be nothing but to add this sin (the one which consists in neglect of this Obligation) to the others.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation.

1. Thus it follows, and in fact it could not be clearer. For I can do nothing here either, I have no power. Accordingly, if it is the case that wherein I have no power, therein (as is fitting) I should not will, I must necessarily conduct myself in such a way as to attempt nothing concerning death, and not to lay violent hands on myself. But men do not see the consequence of this Obligation as easily as they see the consequence of the preceding Obligation. Even though they understand well enough that they cannot defer death, they nevertheless do not see that they cannot bring forward death; the cause of this inadvertence being that they are persuaded that they can move certain bodies. Hence, they believe that they can bring about death with their own hands, and that therefore all they have to do is will it, and they can die more quickly than they would otherwise die. But it is quite clear from our inspection of the human condition that men move neither their own nor other bodies, and consequently, it is as impossible for us to choose death as to cut short life and bring forward death.

2. I am feebler than a dwarf, than any dwarf; God is Hercules; He bears a club, or rather the keys to life and death. Wishing to go on living even at the point of death, I try to wrest the key to life from His hands, thus sinning against my first Obligation. On the edge of desperation, wishing to bring forward death, I try to wrest the key to death from His hands, thus sinning against my second Obligation. In both cases I am stupid and ridiculous; in both cases I will something without having the power. I cannot prolong life, I have no power over it. I grasp the following well enough: that I cannot bring forward death, I have no power over it. So long as

I believed that I move myself, I did not grasp this sufficiently, for I believed that I could thrust a dagger into myself, that I could stab myself in the heart. But when I inspected myself I came to understand that this is false. Hence, since I cannot move myself, if I can destroy myself at all my only recourse is for me to destroy myself by willpower alone. But that I cannot separate myself from this body by willpower alone is so clear to me through my consciousness that nothing clearer could be said or represented to me.

3. A wicked persuasion, and the seedbed of almost every kind of wickedness in this life. Instead of understanding that life is directed towards our Obligation, men believe that it is a kind of interest (a term that they so often use, miserably deceived, and perhaps also deceiving others) paid for convenience and pleasure; so that thereafter they do everything out of pleasure in life and horror of death. Things that were right for their office (such as to refresh the body, to recreate the mind, to acquire a skill, to seek sustenance, and so on) are diverted by this evil end into sin. If only they could see that they cannot cut short their present life any more than they can confer life on themselves, then they might at last see that the whole of their present life must be directed towards their Obligation, and they must apply to it in all its parts (that is, with regard to entering or ending life sooner or later, at birth and at death) the Ethical principle: *I have no power, I do not will; I leave everything to God, to whom it is due.*

4. Since I cannot act outside myself, which is obvious from my inspection of myself, the whole of my action, which is within me, must consist of either *knowing* or *willing*; and it is quite certain and evident that neither of these has any power to release me from my body. For it does not follow either that if I know about death I must therefore die (which is absolutely self-evident), or that if I desire death I shall therefore die merely by being resolved (which is also absolutely evident from the qualification *by being resolved*). But men do not see that they are always resolved; so that, even if the qualification is removed in words, its force and power must necessarily still remain. For after I have willed I am necessarily merely resolved, and it is upon my willing that my action is consummated. The fact that sometimes after I have willed, motion follows in my body, is not due to me, and it is not to be accounted my action, but God's, as we saw quite clearly from the inspection of ourselves.

5. You will perhaps say that persistence is not necessary, for I can do away with myself merely by abstention, that is, by ordaining starvation and fasting to death for myself. I reply: this too will not happen without motion, at least not without first putting out the fiery furnace of the heart, which cannot be done without motion. Thus, the everyday law of God is (as experience teaches us) that we must remain in this body so long there remains established in the heart or the workings of its animal spirits something that directs those spirits, and causes them to flow into the brain and the nerves; and this arrangement cannot be overturned without motion. Hence, without motion we can never be released from this body, so far, I mean, as the everyday law of God is concerned. It is, for the rest, quite certain that He could do otherwise in this matter if He would wish to; and that He could, even when these organs are healthy, easily release any one of us from the animal spirits and other related structures, and take him away. But be that as it may, it remains undeniable that we shall not be released from this body by our own power, any more than we were joined to it by our own power.

6. To be sure, she cannot really fulfil it; but I was speaking *ad hominem*, that is, I spoke according to the opinion of the vulgar, and in that sense it was valid. For the vulgar, like most mortals, believe that they move their bodies, and that the mother and the nurse rock the cradle in which the baby has been laid. But even they know that it is not rocked by the power of the baby, even though they may believe (something in which they are greatly mistaken) that it is rocked by the power of the mother or the nurse. And this analogy, by the way, shows on just what a shoddy and hollow foundation rests that vulgar prejudice which persuades them that they move themselves; there being no reason for this persuasion other than their consciousness that more or less often, at will, or according to their will, motion immediately follows. But by the same argument now, our baby who has his cradle rocked when he wants it to be rocked might conclude (because he desperately wants it to happen) that it is he who has rocked his cradle.*

7. Not because I prevail on God with my will to impart the motion that I desire (as the infant moves his mother to rock the cradle), but

* See also Geulincx' use of this image in Annotation 19 on page 232, above.

because God in His ineffable wisdom knew how to enact such laws of motion that, independently of my will and power, a certain motion corresponds exactly with my free will: see the Annotation I made earlier to the analogy of the two clocks.* Therefore, the analogy of the baby and his mother on the one hand, and of God and me on the other hand, is a lame one; and not in one sense only, as I have already observed in my Annotation (God makes motion, the mother does not make it; the baby moves his mother to move, I do not move God). But the whole force and energy of the analogy turn on this, that just as the motion or rocking of the cradle is made with the baby willing it, though the motion is not made by the baby, so equally, motion is often made with me willing it, though I never make it.

8. The whole nature of sin consists in this alone, and I mean only in this sense, in the sense of *sic-se-habentia* (as the Scholastics call it): *as much as it lies with me, I resist the Divine will*; for there is no question of anyone absolutely resisting His will.† Thus, as much as it lies with us, we can come unsummoned when we destroy ourselves, but then, absolutely speaking, we come anyway, because God wills us to come. Similarly, as much as it lies with us, we do not come, though summoned, when on the point of death we still wish to live, even if an unexpected remission is granted to us; but in the absolute sense the reason we do not come is that God does not will us to come. And so the whole nature of all sin is summed up in this: *as much as it lies with me, I do otherwise than God wills*; though in the absolute sense I never do otherwise. Just as the wickedness of the dwarf does not consist in that he would wrest the club from Hercules' hand, or try to reach it, but that, as much as it lies with him, he would wrest it, or wish to do something towards wresting it. Hence, even if Hercules were to let go the club himself, the wickedness, stupidity, and ineptness of the dwarf are still implied.

9. This is the first point of the proposition: I will not preoccupy myself with death on account of other men's hatred of me. This is contrary to the opinion of Seneca, who believes that men's hatreds and slanders can be so great that it is therefore allowable to turn

* Cf. *ibidem*.

† For Geulincx' argumentation in this matter, see also the passage on God and reason in Chapter 1, § 2, [2], above, as well as the image of walking on a sailing ship in Annotation 9 to the same passage.

one's own hand against oneself. In Epistle 70 he says: *Thus I regard as effeminate the saying of the Rhodian, who, as he was going to be thrust into a cage by a tyrant and fed like a wild beast, being urged to starve himself to death, answered, "Where there's life, there's hope." But the truth is that life should not be purchased at any price.** I would have thought that fortune can do everything for someone who lives, rather than nothing to him who knows how to die.

10. This is the second point of my proposition: I will not preoccupy myself with death even if a certain cruel death is imminent. This is contrary to the opinion of Seneca in the same Epistle: *When an external power gives notice of death, I may not in the same way be able to decide in general whether it should be seized upon or awaited. For there is much that can be said on either side. If one kind of death is with torment, while another is simple and easy, why should I not stretch forth my hand towards the latter?* And later: *Why should I await the cruelty of disease or of man, if I am able to depart in the midst of my torments, and to put an end to my ill fate?*[†]

11. This is the third point of my proposition: I will not preoccupy myself with disease or bodily pain. It is again contrary to the opinion of Seneca, in Epistle [58]: *I should not flee from disease into death, so long as it is curable and not detrimental to the mind; I should not turn my own hand against myself on account of pain; to die thus is to accept defeat. But as soon as I realise that my sufferings are going to be endless, I will depart; not on account of the disease itself but because it will be an obstacle for me to everything that makes life worth living.*[‡]

12. The fourth point of the proposition: even if I am sick in mind and spirit, I will still not preoccupy myself with death. This is again contrary to the opinion of Seneca in the same Epistle: *Thus, I will pronounce on the opinion concerning whether it is allowable to disdain the extremes of old age; and it is that one's end should not be evaded, but brought about by one's own hand. He who awaits his fate passively is like someone afraid; just as he who drinks the flagon dry and also drains the dregs is immoderately given to wine.*[§] And a little later: *But if the body is incapable of its functions, why is it wrong to release the tormented spirit? And perhaps it should be done a little earlier than need be, lest you cannot do it when it has to be done. And*

* Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, § 6.

† Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, §§ 11 and 15 respectively.

‡ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 58, § 36.

§ Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 58, § 32.

when there is greater danger from living in misery than from dying quickly, it is stupid not to redeem at the cost of a little time the risk of great interest.* And a little later: I will not relinquish old age if as a whole it will be of benefit to me; but if it begins to disorder my wits, if it begins to cause my organs to fail, if it relieves me not of my life but of my soul, I will escape from this decayed and dilapidated structure.† The cause of this most pernicious error is that he did not sufficiently perceive that life is subject to one's office and obligation; and that (as all the vulgar are persuaded) he believed that life is concerned with enjoyment, and with *interest* (the very word that Cicero uses in this connection) paid to us for a certain time for our convenience and well-being.‡ It is not surprising, then, that he believed he could forego the benefit when it became too hard for him to obtain it. But it is indeed quite clear from the preceding, as well as from what follows later, that life is not like interest paid to us (which would be concerned with the convenience of him who has received interest or a loan), but that it is rather an Obligation imposed on us, which is not for the convenience of the obligate, but looks to duty and office.

13. Someone will perhaps say: even if our life is concerned with Obligation, and not like a loan or some enjoyment or interest of ours, this Obligation is not, however, so strict that we are required to preserve life at the cost of such great inconveniences to ourselves as have just been recorded in the text. For we are also obliged to preserve the life of a parent, but if it is the case that my life is in danger equally with my father's life, and a stark choice has to be made (for example, we are both drowning), if I cannot save my father's life without perishing myself (for example, by giving up to him a plank of wood in a shipwreck), then it will be allowable for me to abandon my father and take care of my own life by retaining for myself the plank of wood that I have seized hold of. Thus, the Obligation to preserve the life of my father ceases at this point, and I am not obliged to preserve it at such great inconvenience and at the cost of sure and certain loss of my own life; and therefore the Obligation to preserve my own life amidst so many and such great inconveniences can likewise be terminated. I reply: This seems to be roughly the opinion of Seneca; but you should note that no

* Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 58, § 34.

† Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 58, § 35.

‡ Cf. Cicero, *Tusculanae Disputationes* I, 77 and 93.

Obligation upon us can ever yield except to another, greater Obligation, so that, in the case cited, the Obligation to preserve our own life amidst inconveniences, which is the greater, extinguishes the Obligation to preserve the life of our father, which is the lesser Obligation. But which Obligation extinguishes the Obligation to preserve our own life amidst inconveniences that the text maintains? Surely, no Obligation can be conceived here as extinguishing the Obligation to preserve my own life, unless it be an Obligation to one's own convenience, and immunity from miseries, afflictions, and torments. But an Obligation to one's own convenience is ridiculous, and the confusion is obvious from that very qualification, for an Obligation cannot respect the convenience of the obligate, but (as the name implies) only Obligation and duty. In any case, if *per impossibile* there could be an Obligation of a kind that could respect the convenience and favour of the obligate, the obligate could decide to renounce his Obligation (just as we, when we wish, renounce a right that is in our favour); which is plainly most absurd and ridiculous. For an obligatary to remit an Obligation is often reasonable; but for an obligate to remit his Obligation is nothing other than to put himself in the wrong and to sin. Yet the argument pressed by this objection has led many (among whom you must deservedly count Seneca) sincerely to believe that amidst inconveniences it is allowable both to preserve and to reject life. For example, they believe that when a tyrant threatens a cruel and protracted death, it is allowable to hasten death (and that this is part of Nature's and God's dispensation), as well as to await a death that a tyrant will inflict with many torments (which belongs to patience and magnanimity). They consider that an Obligation that forces us to remain here amidst sorrows and inconveniences is of such a kind that the obligate can renounce it. Thus, they fall always into the same trap; the whole basis of the error being that life is granted to us for enjoyment and as interest, not as an Obligation, and is something from which the obligate can withdraw at his pleasure, that is, without any greater Obligation intervening.

14. This is the character of the virtuous man: he puts all his misfortunes down to trials; and not only does he believe it of God that he is being tried, that is, tried by Him when He sends heavy afflictions and adversities, but he is also ready to believe it of his superiors, of the government to which he is subject. So it is that, even when they treat him unjustly and maliciously, he still prefers to believe that he

is being tried, that a test of his industry and constancy is being undertaken, rather than vex himself overmuch; and with this innocent and generous stratagem makes them indeed into what he had believed them to be. Those who were his enemies he renders examiners and explorers of his virtue, so that he sometimes makes them, and the people always, a witness to his virtue and innocence.

15. Here begins the second part of the proposition. For the first part of the proposition was: *I will not divest myself of this life on account of misfortunes.* The second part of the proposition: *I will not remain in this life on account of the good and favourable things of this life;* to which the third part is adjoined below: that is, *I will depart or remain solely in accordance with God's law.* Here, then, is stated the counterpart of the first point of the previous part; there we had the slander and hatred of men, here we have their favour.

16. The counterpart of the second point of the previous part: that is, here we have security, there we had imprisonment and impending death.

17. The counterpart of the third point of the previous part: that is, here we have health, there we had disease and pain.

18. The counterpart of the fourth point: that is, here we have a sound mind and spirit, there we had them broken and in turmoil.

19. This is the character of a reason, to nourish and satisfy the mind. Hence, the mind is never satisfied so long as a reason is hidden from it; and when a reason suddenly becomes visible and direct, it satisfies and completes the mind, which desires nothing further. For the human mind is generally accustomed to proceed by these steps: first, it does not understand the sense of the propositions that the teacher brings before it. For example, in this proposition of Logic, *from the contrary of the consequent the contrary of the antecedent follows,* the beginner sees nothing, neither the truth of the significate nor the sense or force of the signification. First, therefore, the teacher impresses on the beginner the signification of the proposition, and explains the significations of the words; and so the beginner has taken the *first* step from profound ignorance to knowledge of at least the signification and the sense. But doubt resides in this first step, for even though the beginner may now have perceived both the signification and the sense of the proposition, *the number of grains of sand in the sea is even,* he doubts, and remains quite uncertain. Thus, the authority of the teacher helps him, inasmuch as the teacher is someone whom he

sees to be well-informed on Logical matters, who cannot easily be deceived, and in no way wants to deceive him; and here he has taken the *second* step, passing from doubt to a semblance of truth, that is, to the probable. The teacher now helps the beginner again, illustrating the proposition with examples, telling him, for instance: *From 'I think' follows 'I exist', and likewise, from 'I do not exist' follows 'I do not think'; and again, From 'I run' follows 'I move', and likewise, from 'I do not move' follows 'I do not run'*; and offering ever so many examples of a similar kind. And this constitutes the *third* step, which now conveys the beginner out of a semblance of truth into certainty. But there is still something obscure about this step, something in which the mind of the beginner does not acquiesce; and when he has recognised for certain that it is the truth, he enquires why it is the truth, he enquires the *reason*. As soon as the teacher has imparted this, it constitutes the *fourth* step, which now conveys the beginner out of certainty into self-evidence; now he acquiesces, now it is enough for him, and he requires nothing beyond this reason. On this, see my *Logic*.*

20. Here begins the third part of the proposition; which joins everything together in this way: *I will not wish to live either longer on account of favourable things, or not so long on account of adverse things; but whether I am surrounded by adverse things or favourable things, I will live until God releases me.*

21. Because, that is, on this second Obligation all the subsequent ones are founded, at least down to the sixth Obligation inclusive. For sustenance must be obtained (the third Obligation) in order to live (the second Obligation); some mode of life must be chosen (the fourth Obligation) in order that sustenance can be had; many things must be done, many things borne (the fifth Obligation) to enable us to be equal to the mode of life that we have assumed; and amongst other things, for the same reason, the mind must now and then be relaxed (the sixth Obligation). You see how in a continuous and unbroken chain the subsequent Obligations are derived from the second, so that if the latter should fail, the former will necessarily at once fall into ruins. For if there is no Obligation to preserve one's life there will also be no Obligation to obtain sustenance (for this is

* In Part 4, Section 2 of the *Logica fundamentis suis restituta* (1662), Geulincx discusses Reason and reasoning in terms of producing valid and satisfying answers to a *Why?*-question. Cf. *Opera* I, 421 ff.

required for the preservation of life), nor will there be any Obligation to choose a mode of life (for this is chosen in order that sustenance may be obtained), nor will there be any Obligation to do and to bear many things (for we do and bear them in order that our mode of life may be productive and afford us sustenance), nor will there be any Obligation to relax the mind (for the mind must be relaxed in order that we may be ready for the doing and bearing). See how each Obligation collapses, and in their place mere lust descends on us: now we shall no longer do those things unless it pleases us, since we are not obliged to do them; and so we shall do them if it pleases us, otherwise we shall not do them.

22. It is wonderful with what spirit, with what ferocity, and with what inhumanity Seneca hammers out this teaching of his in so many places; and how he praises Cato and sundry others who in violation of God's commands and led by personal predilections laid impious hands on themselves. See his Treatise on Providence and his Epistles 58, 70, etc. And it is no less wonderful how he bases his teaching on no foundation of argument, as will emerge in what follows.

23. With these selfsame words he gives evidence that he does not wish to acquire Obligation (seeing, as if through a cloud, amidst the turmoil of his affections, how it does not suit his teaching). But having gone overboard for freedom (that false and hollow freedom), he seeks only to dissolve and demolish all office and Obligation.

24. It was proclaimed by the Stoics (something at which every sound mind shudders) that the virtuous man is the equal of God, and in fact, in many respects is superior to God. For example, while God is necessarily good, the virtuous man is not; while God is good without having to suffer evils, the virtuous man must conquer and overcome evils; and many things in similar vein.*

25. This is a summary of his argument: since God has granted at all times and in every place that there should be so many and such readily available exits from this life, it does not seem that he would want a virtuous man to be detained here amidst the more

* A general reference to the Stoic idea of human perfectibility and 'divinity' may be found in Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae Philosophorum* VII, 119. Seneca mentions the possibility of a human likeness to God in *De Providentia* Chapter 1, § 5, and argues that man may even surpass God in *De Providentia* Chapter 6, § 6. The editors wish to thank Ruben Buys for these references.

serious afflictions and torments. Just as a jailer, when he looses fetters and unlocks the prison, seems by so doing to make a free man out of a captive, so, if the virtuous man is excessively oppressed (for example, by the more atrocious outrages of men, by death that must come through terrible tortures, by incurable diseases, intolerable pains, madness, and by a body useless in its functions), he cannot be blamed for departing the prison-house of the body, which everywhere stands open, beckoning us towards the exit. The Stoics did not believe that it was allowable to encompass one's own death for any reason at all, but only for such reasons as I recorded just now in parentheses, and enumerated earlier in the Annotations (arising out of Seneca) to paragraph 3 of this § 5.

26. From breathing you draw your life; therefore, all you need to do is leave off drawing it, that is, cease breathing; for instance, by cupping the palm of your hand over your mouth and nostrils, tightly constricting them, tying a rope around your neck, or stuffing a sponge down your throat. Seneca, in his 70th Epistle, even gives an example of this, where someone who was to be thrown to the wild beasts decided that he had to spill his guts beforehand, and snatching up a sponge that had been placed next to the toilets for wiping the backside, stuffed it down his throat, and so cheated the crowd of their entertainment.*

27. It is ambiguous; for duty brings with it both a gift and a favour, and office and obligation. Seneca seems to take it in the former sense, thus implying that when the gift that nature gave us when it gave us life is rendered useless, and is now no longer a gift but a burden, we can renounce it; just as we repay a moneylender the sum which we may have received as a loan when it becomes oppressive or useless on account of either our disdain of it or some other cause, and we no longer appreciate the benefit of it.

28. It is wonderful with what gusto he revels here, how much pleasure he takes in redoubling those savage cries of his whenever he can. You would think you were listening to a warrior, or more accurately, a raider, exulting over slaughter and blood, rather than a philosopher.

29. Again and again he flies into one of his customary rages, and trumpets that bloodthirsty and damnable war-cry against the law of God.

* Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, § 20–21.

30. To these arguments, or rather cries, of Seneca I respond firstly, that while it is not easy for us to depart from our body, so far as our own power and efficacy are concerned it is wholly impossible (as is now clear enough both from the preceding and what follows in paragraph 6); secondly, even if it were easy to depart from our body, and to commit suicide, according to the common persuasion (because, that is, the motion required to do away with a man is not usually denied to our will), no argument can be adduced from it in favour of this impious doctrine of Seneca, for things that are easy in this sense are often the gravest crimes. Hence, it by no means follows that *since God has often left it up to us, He has left it up to us entirely*; or, *it is easy, therefore we should do it*. These consequences, I say, are null and void, as is quite self-evident. To be sure, the greater the crime is, the greater the facility to perpetrate it God seems to have provided us with. For is there anything easier than to kill the father with whom you live, who believes you to be a son rather than an enemy who is wary of you, who suspects even your slightest movements, who keeps his weapons ready for action, and is prepared to meet force with force? Is it not easier to assassinate a virtuous prince who goes amongst his people without guard or escort, as if they were his brothers, than a tyrant surrounded by a knot of bodyguards? And so on; the easier it is either to commit a crime against others or allow oneself to become a victim of it, the graver the crime. But as far as the reasons are concerned with which they wish to equip someone who is about to slay himself, they have no force; for if there is one cause that will suffice, then any old cause will suffice. A lover who is rejected by a faithless woman will lay hands on himself, or starve himself to death, no less justifiably than the man of Rhodes, of whom Seneca speaks in his 70th Epistle.* For a foolish lover is often as sensitive to foolish disdain as the man of Rhodes to the contempt he suffered from Lysimachus when he was locked in a cage; and certainly it must be seen as no slight cause that impels someone to reject the life that man holds most dear. Therefore, though it often seems slight to others, certainly to him who is so carried away by it that he does away with himself, it hardly seems slight. What, then, does it matter what sort or how much of a cause lies within him? To one over whom it has had the

* Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, § 6.

power to induce him to lay down his life it is never less than great and impressive. Causes have never been great but in the estimation of certain persons, and in the judgements and persuasions to which they gave rise. For what is the case? You are bereft of goods and possessions, despised, and treated with the utmost possible contempt: should you reckon it to be a grave cause, one that gives you the right to reject life? You will find people who laugh at such things, play the fool, and

—*As an empty-handed wayfarer mock the highwayman.**

The important thing is, it still remains for Seneca frankly to make an admission, namely, that anyone who slays himself has done it rightly for whatever reason he has done it; and that he reduces everything to lust, since it pleases him to depart when it does not please him to stay. The pretext of this argument, which he recommends to anyone who is to depart, is nothing but a pretext, and the matter comes down simply to this, that when it pleases you to live, you can live, when it does not please you, you can die; which are almost the very words of Seneca in his 70th Epistle: *It pleases you? Live. It does not please you? Then you can return whence you came.*[†]

31. Not by corporeal fetters, which (as you have just seen from Seneca) they can easily shuffle off. Hence, the whole difficulty for them is how to shuffle off the divine law, which, since they cannot shuffle it off, they equally do not wish to shuffle off. And so the argument that depended on the ability to break out of those fetters falls down.

32. That is, to be captive, or bound, and to be free and released. In the virtuous man there is no conflict, as he has realised that he cannot be free otherwise than in the service of God and His law. See the Annotations I made earlier to the Fruit of Obedience.

33. It would certainly have been more convenient for Seneca to have given God the role of jailer rather than commander. For he would have looked better saying: I have let you out of prison, opened all your windows and vents, and unshackled you: if it does not please you to remain here, you can depart. But when he makes God speak like a commander, it is nonsense; and since he cannot make God

* Juvenal, *Saturae* X, 22.

† Seneca, *Epistulae Morales ad Lucilium*, Epistle 70, § 15.

ridiculous, he inevitably makes himself ridiculous, as is clear enough from what follows immediately in the text. However, it was shameful of him to impose such an undignified role on God; though if he had not imposed it, his discussion would have lacked colour. The analogy is not valid for a commander; for a jailer, if that were not to impose an undignified role on God, it might have had some semblance of truth.

34. If Seneca had consistently pursued the analogy of a commander, he would have had to enter wholly into my opinion, as is clear enough from what is closely subjoined in the text. Hence, Seneca here sins not only against the truth, but even more gravely against his own Rhetorical art, which prescribes for the analogy that he adopted that it should accommodate as many other things as possible; so that if a commander is introduced, he should speak as a commander, not as a jailer.

35. That is to say, it is not ease or difficulty that regulates morals or Ethics, but prescription and prohibition. It is a sin not because it is difficult, but because it is prohibited; and it is right to do it not because it is easy, but because it is prescribed. In fact, most crimes are the graver the easier they are to commit, as I noted earlier.

36. I in turn offer to Seneca, and urge upon him, the analogy that he himself initiated: that God, as a commander, leads us as soldiers. And it is as wrong for a commander to give his soldiers permission to flee as for soldiers to take flight like cowards in the face of the enemy. Everything should have been the opposite in this example: a commander must urge his men to stand fast, and a brave soldier must stand his ground against the enemy; likewise, God warns us not to end our lives on account of the misfortunes of our lot, and that we must conduct ourselves as steadfast and constant in our resolve not to give way.

37. Of course, we are something far different from these bodies: we think, these bodies of ours do not think, albeit that they present us with the occasion for a variety of thoughts. But *how* they achieve this is ineffable; this much is certain, they do not achieve it by means of their own power, but by the power of someone else. See the Inspection of Oneself, paragraph 9.

38. Away, then, with that doctrine of some of the Scholastics, which endowed us with three souls, a vegetable, a sentient, and a rational soul. We are certainly not the subject of a vegetable soul: we are nourished, we grow, we generate, without any knowledge or

consciousness of any such things. But we are indeed a sentient and a rational soul so long as we are in the body; though these are not two things in us, but one simple thing, since we feel quite clearly that we are one and the same thing, feeling and reasoning at the same time; but the same thing, as such, does not imply having parts.

39. For it is certain that if someone dies turned away from God and His law, he must on that ground alone remain for ever turned away, since there is nothing that could by itself turn him back again. For our body and our senses, which are our only means of return, are absent. But to remain turned away for ever is torment and perpetual confusion, with the mind understanding Him from whom it has turned away, but not understanding what it has turned to instead—an understanding that could be obtained only through the medium of his body and senses, of which his mind is now bereft.

The Argument of § 5

The Second Obligation is, not to depart this life unless God has summoned you. For wherein I have no power, I must not will; but I have no power to depart this life, and therefore I must not will it. This covers paragraph 1.

Indeed, I have been wont to believe that I have power in this; but since I cannot by willpower alone release myself from the body, and the required motion, over which I have no jurisdiction, has to be supplied from outside, I understand plainly that I was mistaken. This covers paragraph 2.

Hence, I firmly hold to this: no affliction will be so great as to lead me to wish to give up my life; no happiness so great as to persuade me to wish to hold on to my life; the decision will rest with the law of God. This covers paragraph 3.

This Obligation is practically the foundation for the others: anyone who shakes it overturns the whole of Ethics. He also discharges all office onto desire; for he lives because it pleases him, he eats that he may live, he works that he may eat, and so on. Hence, everything, from first to last, is driven by desire. This covers paragraph 4.

Seneca objects, wanting to be free to depart this life because it is easy to depart, especially if calamity urges departure. This covers paragraph 5.

But above all, not only is it is not easy for us, it is impossible. And even though I have to grant that, according to the common way of speaking, it is easy, it does not follow that one should do it,

since many things that should never be done are easy. Incidentally, we see here the simplicity of the human mind, and that there are no parts to be found in us, inasmuch as we are clearly conscious that whatever happens within us is the subject of one and the same thing; but the same thing, as such, is simple. This covers paragraph 6.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation.

1. For the first Obligation is in a way sterile, and does not engender other Obligations; at least not such as concern the human condition: for in the very fact that satisfaction is made to the first Obligation, the human condition expires. The first Obligation orders us to obey God when He summons us, and to return to Him when He summons us from among the living. When we have done this we shall therewith have ceased to be men; and whatever kind of Obligation will then be imposed on us (for as beings who are essentially servants and subjects of God, we shall never transcend Obligation, as is shown in this Treatise, in Section II, § 12, paragraph 3),* we must rise to it with equanimity. Only then we shall see it in full; now we see in the light of nature a little of what, and of what kind, those Obligations are going to be.

2. For it continually ebbs away, and if you do not refresh it, it fails; and you then sin against the Second Obligation, which orders us to remain here. And in truth, there seems to be no difficulty about this Third Obligation in the case of the healthy and vigorous; for it is accompanied by the pleasure that is usually felt in refreshing the body (hunger, thirst, tiredness, and suchlike, being relieved by eating, drinking, and sleeping respectively). Hence, men are wont to have all too much time for the things that are prescribed by this Obligation, and they are likely to be amused when one proposes to call it an Obligation;¹⁰ feeling that they are already sufficiently, and indeed more than sufficiently, intent and set upon

¹⁰ In fact, they believe an Obligation to exist because of the task prescribed in the Obligation; and that it makes no difference how the task is performed. Hence, their understanding being that the task that is contained in the Obligation, whether

* Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 12 has only two parts, neither of which deals with the subject of our obligations beyond death. However, the idea that no-one besides God has “gained the summit of things” does occur in Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 11, [3], as well as in Annotation 6 to that same passage.

fattening up their bodies. But they should know that giving time to something that is prescribed by this Obligation is not giving time to the Obligation itself, or following what God commands, but is neglecting that very command; for they are motivated not by the imperative of the command but by their desire to do what is contained in the command.

3. In their treatises on diet Physicians prescribe moderation. For instance, Hippocrates advises one to rise from the table while still hungry, and likewise to give over drinking while still thirsty, and to give over sleeping and get up while still a little drowsy.* For we are apt to feel later on that we did not need to eat, drink, or sleep any more, when after a short interval of time we no longer feel hungry,

it is eating, drinking, recreating the mind etc., is sufficiently performed even if the Obligation is absent (for they are sufficiently impelled to it by natural desire), they can hardly fail to see the Obligation as anything but trifling and superfluous. And they have almost all fallen into this prejudice because they believe the Obligation to be similar to their desires, and refer an Obligation mostly to the desire of Him who has imposed the Obligation on us, that is, God; and desires are fulfilled no matter how what they have urged to be fulfilled is fulfilled. Thus, if drink is set before someone who is thirsty, riches set before an avaricious man, and so on, how it is done, whether rightly or wrongly, has nothing to do with the thirst or the avarice itself. There are thirsty or avaricious people who may wish to satisfy their thirst or avarice without any great offence; but this relates to their other desires, it does not affect their thirst or avarice in itself, which is aimed solely at drink or riches.† So also, men began to think of an Obligation (chiefly because they refer it, quite perversely to God's desire) that it is enough if the task is done; and that, accordingly, if it is to be fulfilled by other means, there is no point in the Obligation that He imposes. But this is very wrong, for God and Reason hardly require our cooperation; in fact, they do not in the strict sense impose any task on us. If the task itself is beyond our power, it is also beyond our Obligation; it envisages an outcome that has never been prescribed. God is therefore content with our spirit and intention alone. But He also requires this, He imposes this on us, that if a task is done which an Obligation seemed to indicate, then it is hardly enough if it is done without any intention of obeying Divine Law. Hence, the task itself is nothing; it can fail to be discharged even though you are virtuous (when, that is, your intention of doing what was contained in the Obligation is frustrated of an outcome), and it can be discharged even though you are vicious (that is, when you perform a task without any intention of following Divine Law). Therefore, these Obligations order us not simply to perform a task, but also to have an intention of performing it because God has ordered it.

* Hippocrates prescribed moderation in exercise, food, drink, sleep and sex in *Epidemia* VI, 6, 6. *Aphorisms* II, 3, 4 and 51 also emphasize the need for keeping measure. None of these passages, however, seem to be the one that Geulincx has in mind.

† Unclear passage. The idea seems to be that no particular action will decide the moral character of the case, which depends on the intention alone.

or inclined to slumber, respectively. For only as long as there is not just a residue of our hunger, thirst, and tiredness left, but a good deal of them, shall we need to go on eating, drinking, and sleeping.

4. Many who normally pass as noble or virtuous men go astray here. Though reduced to extremity, they still refuse to beg, pleading that they are too noble, and cannot for shame and modesty's sake expose their condition to those who might be able to provide them with support and sustenance. However, this is not nobility (as they allege), but wickedness that sets itself up against God's command, and prefers social decorum to God's law. For God has commanded us to live, and therefore to eat; and when this cannot be obtained by labour and study, it must be sought even by begging from door to door. A hard Obligation to those who value themselves only by outward appearance and the opinions of men, but one that must sometimes be faced by those who regard God's law as more important than themselves.

5. In fact, the Obligation to procreate arises not from this, but from Politics. For there are two divisions of Ethics, Monarchics and Politics. In Monarchics we are concerned with, and it teaches us, how a man, considered in the abstract and apart from other men, should conduct himself (see my Dutch version of this same paragraph 2).^{*} Politics teaches us how a man should conduct himself in the company of other men. One division of this is Economics, to which the Obligation to procreate properly belongs. But the Obligation to procreate is closely analogous to the third Obligation (for this is related to both refreshment and nourishment; but now, to eat, which is the subject of the third Obligation, is to nourish and refresh oneself, while to procreate is to nourish and refresh the human race; and just as by means of nutrition, properly so called, we replace with another part a part that has failed, so by means of procreation we replace with another man a man who has been carried off by

^{*} In his Dutch version of Treatise I, Geulincx offers a similar description for what he calls 'Monarchics' here. However, though he gives two alternative names for 'Politics' (viz. *Politie* and *Volx-zeden*), he does not offer any specific name in Dutch for the part of ethics that deals with the moral attitude and conduct of individuals when considered apart from society. Cf. Arnout Geulincx, *Van de Hoofst-deuchden: De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667/*Van de Hoofst-deuchden: De Eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, ed. J.P.N. Land, Antwerpen – Gent – 's Gravenhage: Buschmann – Hoste – Nyhoff, 1895, 150–151/Arnout Geulincx, *Van de hoofstdeugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 108.

death). For this reason, it was not inapposite to say something here about procreation.

6. These things really relate to paragraph 1; but because there is a lengthy parenthesis in the middle of paragraph 2, it is convenient to add that “however” after the digression as a warning that we are returning to the course from which we had digressed.

7. That is, lest I should preoccupy myself so much with refreshing my body that as a result I forget to preoccupy myself with the refreshment of my body in order that I may live—but live because God has commanded me to live. In brief, I shall eat in order to live, not live in order to eat.

8. The House of Virtue, once erected, rests on humility, or abandonment of oneself. Accordingly, when I eat, I shall eat not for myself (having abandoned myself), but that I may live. However, I shall not leave it at that, lest perchance I find again that self which I have so happily lost. I shall henceforth live because God has ordered it, and so be forever passing myself by as I hurry on towards God with my whole heart and mind.

9. For this would imply that I follow this Obligation for my own sake. If I am anxious to obtain the wherewithal to nourish myself, it is not then an Obligation, that is, the law of God, that bids me nourish myself, and which is the reason why I nourish myself, but pleasure in life, or something else of that kind, which I derive from myself. If my Obligation is to be the reason why I nourish myself, I should not be distressed when the wherewithal to eat is not to be found, seeing that no-one is duty-bound to the impossible, as the common saying has it. In such a case I would have to assume that this Obligation has lapsed, and that in its stead another Obligation has arisen, to wit, the Obligation of dying. But it is of no concern to someone who is led by Obligation alone (and it is behovely to be led by this alone if we would be virtuous) whether he preoccupies himself with this rather than that Obligation, just as a good servant who is ordered, say, to make a bed regards it of no concern of his if he is interrupted and ordered to be about something else, say, to carry a message somewhere; for a good servant is motivated solely by the will and commands of his master.

10. The Passions are not within our power (as will be shown later in the special Treatise on the Passions). Thus, disquiet, anxiety, fear, and similar passions, which are forever making man tremble at the prospect of destitution and the other afflictions of life’s approaching

end that threaten him, are subject to the order of nature, and are outside the scope of morals, with neither virtue nor vice being involved. But to do or not do anything on account of passions (that is, to cite, and maintain them, as reasons) relates wholly to vice. Therefore, when passions occur, we must do what is said in the text, and perform as much as is within our competence, follow what Reason dictates, be careless of anything else, and regard those passions as of no account, at least so far as the intention of the mind is concerned, that is, beware assiduously lest they present us with a reason for doing or not doing anything, reserving the whole thing to Reason by right and power.

11. Many hypocritically pious folk seize on this as an excuse for their disobedience. When God summons me, they say, I would willingly die, I would willingly obey, and I do not trouble about myself. But what of my wife, who will be a widow? What of my children, who will be fatherless? However, such folk lie brazenly when they say that they do not trouble about themselves; for they trouble about things that are *theirs*, and *theirs* presupposes *themselves*. In this sense, they trouble a great deal about themselves, and, as I said, are looking here only for an excuse. Why do they not trouble about the widow and fatherless children of anyone else who is dying? Only because here there is no trace of the *self* whom they had found elsewhere, and have loved ever since.

12. Here I take to task the second excuse resorted to by hypocritically pious or over-anxious folk, namely: I would willingly leave life and come to God when He summons me, but my sins stand in the way, and I would want first to wash them away through penitence. In this we again hear the sound of manifest self-love and evasion of divine law; for if you have abandoned yourself (as you ought to have done), why are you so anxious about the manner of your reception?

13. Among Philosophies, the opinion of Pythagoras has by far the most resemblance to the truth, namely, that when we die, we are transfused into another body. But it is only opinion and speculation, not science, Reason being profoundly silent on it: and only the revelation of God in Holy Scripture can tell us anything about it. And because it is opinion, it is unworthy of a philosopher, for *to believe* (that is, to opine, to conceive and cherish opinions) is *not for the Wise Man* (not for the sage or philosopher), as the well-known saying

has it.* Accordingly, because we still cannot be certain of their truth, such opinions, speculations, and fancies, even if they happen to be true, should be rejected by the philosopher and left to the vulgar, who very much delight in, and relish them.

14. As Christians for the most part believe: we shall remain with God at least for a time, divested of our body, until we take it again, as our Holy Scriptures tell us.

15. Here I take to task the insanity of those abject and wretched little men who, considering only their offences, and taking no account of divine compassion, sometimes commit suicide out of desperation, adding to their offences the last and gravest offence of all.

16. I allude to the rashness of those stupid people who remit everything to the Goodness and mercy of God, and forswear God's Justice.

17. The doctrine of Christians: He will accept us, though we are sinners, through Christ, when Christ takes our sins upon Himself (for He is the lamb who takes away the sins of the world); and as He is good, forgives us by not reclaiming from us in full measure the ransom already paid.

18. I have learned by inspecting myself that the totality of my human condition, comprising birth, life, and death, is a monument to the ineffable wisdom of God. We know *that it exists*; we do not know, in fact, we know that it is not given to us to know, *how it exists*. This we rightly call *ineffable* (as will emerge later, in Treatise II, where I shall speak of Piety), because *we know that it exists, but we do not know how it exists, and we know only this much, that we cannot know*. Hence, therefore, runs the reasoning of one in doubt: God is ineffable in joining me to a body; how can I know whether He will not equally ineffably join His Justice with His mercy in punishing me and forgiving me? And certainly, in their Holy Scriptures Christians bear witness that He does so join them, both punishing me in Christ, and forgiving me for Christ's sake: so perhaps there is something I can know, if I seek it earnestly enough.

19. For whichever way I turn, I do not transcend my Obligations; and so long as I turn to my Obligations there is no room left for

* *Putare non est Sapientis*: Latin saying of unknown origin. Plato presented right opinion as an intermediate stage between true judgement and ignorance. See, e.g., *Symposium*, 202 a.

anxiety. Nothing can come between me and my Obligations but the intervention of another Obligation; and what is wrong with this? To someone who pursues only Obligation, no Obligation is either better or worse than any other; and if we want to be virtuous, we must all be like that.

20. The Objection that is raised here lies in what I have proposed as a fundamental principle of Ethics: *Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will*; on which I established the two preceding Obligations on a secure enough basis. But this Third Obligation does not seem to rest securely enough on that principle; for the principle is suitable to be taken only in a negative sense (which seemed to be all that was needed for the two preceding Obligations, as they are contained in negative concepts, namely, *Come when God calls you*, that is, you must accept the dissolution of your nature without regret, and not struggle against it; a sound argument, because you have no power over it; and similarly, with the second Obligation: *Remain until you are summoned*, that is, do not try to do anything about the dissolution of your nature, or human condition; a sound argument, because you have no power over it). But this Third Obligation is quite positive, namely, *Eat, drink, etc.*, which we cannot satisfy on a merely negative understanding. You will not eat and drink if you leave everything as it is, as you will depart or remain by leaving everything as it is. Unless we will ourselves to eat and drink, refreshment of our body will not result; and therefore something more is enjoined upon us here, something that cannot be expedited by mere submission. I reply: it is true; the service, the assent, the approbation, even the cooperation of God, are required by us here. For since we arrive at the Second Obligation under the guidance of Reason, and see that we cannot obey it unless we make a contribution of our own (for we shall not remain here unless we eat, and we shall not eat unless we will ourselves to eat), we understand that there must be a contribution by us; though to be sure, it has in itself no power proportionate to keep us here, but owes its power solely to the will and ordinance of Him who wishes Himself to be served by us in this way. If we wish to eat, it is not on that account that the motion follows in which the act of eating consists; nor, even if it does follow, is it necessary that the refreshment of our body should follow on that account. Therefore, God wants us to will (to eat and drink), and wants also, when we will this, to supply the motion that is called

‘chewing’, and from this He procures and obtains the refreshment of our body, and finally, also from this, our persistence in it. Here, then, is a complete foundation for Ethics: *to follow God, to be subject to God*; for that is what it comes to at last, as we saw; and this whole moral programme cannot be expedited if we take it in a merely negative sense. And that we are essentially servants of God, I shall demonstrate later, when I come to the Adminicle of Humility.

21. For this seems to agree with our axiom: *Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will.* But I reply that God sometimes wills that our will should have some power where it could have had no power of its own; and for that reason we too must will. For example, in the present case, our will has no power of its own over eating, it has power on account of God’s ordinance (for God has determined not to feed us unless we wish to eat; therefore, we have so to will). It is like gold, which has no power of its own to purchase necessities, so that whatever power of its own it has must be rejected as a useless and delusive thing: the authority and ordinance of men have determined what value is given to gold, whereupon it is then no longer to be rejected, and has the power to purchase bread. The same thing happens with our will: it must be rejected so far as its own power is concerned, as it has no power over eating; but so far as the authority of God is concerned, who gives weight and value to it, it has power, and can be used to obtain nourishment.

22. This is a popular saying, men being quite dulled by the senses and the notions of the vulgar, who believe that eating of whatever kind is to be done only out of the pleasure of life, out of nagging hunger and thirst, and out of similar passions of theirs, and they regard it as quite ridiculous to wish to counteract such passions by means of their thoughts. And the very ones who are here called dull are a little later ironically called subtle; for as we soon see, the little piece of grit must be got rid of *with subtlety*. These people, therefore, are dull in a vulgar manner; but Philosophers, though they indeed err, err acutely; and their error is one not of defect (as the vulgar believe), but of excess; arising, that is, out of excessively rigorous adherence to the ethical principle: *Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will.*

23. Here something more is implied than can be inferred from that principle of Ethics, *Wherein you have no power, etc.*; for we must

not conduct ourselves in everything in a merely negative sense, but assent positively, as I noted earlier;* and it is incumbent upon us also to do our part in the way that is described there.

24. And so does our consciousness; for we are conscious that the motions necessary to eating will not be forthcoming unless we actively will them; but if those motions cease to be forthcoming etc., as in the text.

The Argument of § 6

The Third Obligation concerns the need to refresh the body. It arises from the Second Obligation; for if you do not refresh the body, it will fail; which the Second Obligation forbids. This covers paragraph 1.

A digression respecting the Obligation to procreate, undertaken on account of an analogy with the Third Obligation. This covers paragraph 2.

Anxiety is banned by the performance of this Obligation; for anxiety has no place in one who seeks only his office and Obligations. For if he cannot fulfil an Obligation, then that Obligation thereby expires, and is superseded by another Obligation; but either is equally welcome to someone who seeks Obligation only insofar as it is Obligation. This covers paragraph 3.

An objection is raised to the Third Obligation on the basis of the Ethical principle, *Wherein you have no power, etc.* For it seems that we have no power over the refreshment of the body either. I reply, that the Ethical principle, *Wherein you have no power, etc.*, does not suffice if one does not assent to God, and cooperate with Him in what He Himself has ordained. This covers paragraph 4.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation.

1. Regarding these two opposites, we should take the greatest care neither to abandon recklessly a mode of life once we have taken it up, nor to cling too stubbornly to it. They who do not observe this rule usually fall into destitution and want of all things, especially those who violate the former part of it, that is, those who are too ready to alter their mode of life, for they are pursued by that melancholy which is born out of lack of a settled mode of life. Hence, it

* See Annotation 20, above.

is often the case that men who are cultivated and ingenious from much learning are destitute and miserable, sad and afflicted. For since they possess an agile and versatile intelligence with which they can succeed in many different ways, they easily fall prey to boredom with their present state, and expectation of another state to come. But against this, the mind must be steadfast, and fixed in the sure state which God has given it, by resting in, and keeping before its eyes that Dutch saying of ours: *Twelve professions, thirteen misfortunes* (*twaelf ambachten, dertien ongelucken*). In general, it is better here to be stubborn, and to cling to one's state, than to wander airily from one state to another.

2. We see in all these Obligations a certain justice, warning us in the strongest terms to beware both of what is excessive and what is defective. Therefore, because we must live for God's law, we must will ourselves to live as much as God ordains it; no more (like those who sin against the First Obligation, and do not want to return when God summons them), and no less (like those who sin against the Second Obligation, and by doing away with themselves come, insofar as it falls to them, before they are summoned). So also, because we must eat in order to live, Justice again comes into play, dictating that we should eat neither more nor less than suffices to go on living; and again, because we must seek a state of life in which we may eat, Justice dictates that we should not affect a greater or lesser state than that requires. If anyone does more or less than this, he does it in order to satisfy his desire; for that *more* and that *less* pass beyond his Obligation, and accordingly look to the desire of the operator, or Obligate, who does either more, or less, because it pleases him, and not because the law dictates it.

3. Here we see how the second part of Justice is served in these Obligations: for whereas paragraph 2 prescribed 'nothing in excess', this paragraph 3 prescribes 'not too little'.

4. In choosing a mode of life, we must take into account the robustness of our body, our wits, and our spirit; for we have to judge on the basis of these which mode of life we are best fitted for, as is explained by the examples cited here.

5. Anxiety is the most frequent obstacle to this Obligation; for men are anxious about how to obtain sustenance (the means to which being all subject to this Obligation, which prescribes what kind of life is to be chosen to earn our living). Anxiety is sometimes also involved in other Obligations, but mostly by accident; as when the

dying get anxious, first about the families they are leaving behind, and then about themselves, whom they know will continue to exist when divested of their body, understanding that in the course of nature they are to receive condign punishment in respect of things not well done while they were here. But in the strict sense there is no anxiety about the Second Obligation, for it is an end that men are accustomed to appoint for themselves; and in this there is in the strict sense no anxiety about the end, only about the means that are to be employed to the end. There is usually no anxiety about the Third Obligation either, for we are not usually anxious about eating (which is subject to the Third Obligation), only about having the wherewithal to eat, and that it suffices for our consumption (which properly is subject to the Fourth Obligation). Note also, that anxiety is of two kinds, namely, *anxiety-that*, and *anxiety-lest*. Anxiety-that is anxiety about pursuing something through its means (such as anxiety about this Obligation, namely, that it suffices for our consumption); anxiety-lest is anxiety about the First Obligation, in which we are anxious lest our own affairs, as we depart this life, are in a bad state, and we ourselves, moving into another state, may be punished, as we deserve.

6. This abolishes all anxiety; for it is impossible that I should wish to obey God, yet still be anxious (understand this as touching the inclination of the mind; for we can still be anxious about passions), because when I cannot fulfil a Divine Obligation, there is nothing bad about this, it is harmless, it is of no consequence. It follows only that, when one Obligation expires, I will have to devote myself to another Obligation in a similarly honest and virtuous way, as in the case of the preceding Obligation.

The Argument of § 7

This Obligation involves the following four elements: 1. Choice of mode of life; 2. Devotion to this mode of life; 3. Constancy in this mode of life; 4. The vicissitudes of this mode of life. As to Choice, justice must be served by taking up a mode of life that is neither greater nor less than is required for sustenance (for the rationale of this Obligation depends on the Third Obligation); and this is the first part of Justice, which consists in squaring the mode of life with the Third Obligation. The second part of justice consists in squaring the mode of life with the person who takes it up, by choosing the mode of life that his wits, his spirit, and his body are best fitted for.

As to the Dedication that we must devote to our vocation, it largely depends on the Fifth Obligation.

As to Constancy and Vicissitudes, a brief warning that our mode of life should be changed as little as possible.

An Appendix concerning Anxiety about living, which occurs principally in the choice of mode of life. For the law is satisfied by what we intend to do: if someone pursues only the law, there is no reason for him to be anxious, since what he intends is always close at hand, and never requires lengthy pursuit.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 8. Fifth Obligation.

1. The Fifth Obligation has nothing unclear about it.

The Argument of § 8

To bear many things, to do many things; for sometimes I cannot find a mode of life that is productive and affords me sustenance.

I consider four instances in which difficulties may arise. First, in the mode of life of a learned man (in which study and a thousand tediums have to be endured, and which is subject to envy and criticism); second, in the mode of life of a magistrate (in which there are nocturnal sessions, cares, and the ingratitude and fury of the vulgar over all these); third, in a humble and downtrodden mode of life (where there is contempt, poverty, and a harsh, daily grind); fourth, in the vicissitudes of one's mode of life (where the strange and the unaccustomed disturb and alarm, afflicting the mind with a thousand anxieties). In the midst of all these the mind has to stay calm.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation.

1. What I said earlier about the Third Obligation, namely, that it seems ridiculous to those who are ignorant of the true nature of Ethics, holds even more strongly of this Sixth Obligation. For they can scarcely stop themselves from laughing when they see this Obligation included with the others, because they know that they dedicate themselves spontaneously to this Obligation, or rather to what is covered by it, not only in a sufficient, but in a more than sufficient manner. But such men are completely ignorant of the nature of Ethics: they do not realise that we are often obliged to do what we are in fact driven to do by instinct and the blind urgency of our passions, and that it is one thing to perform an Obligation

and another thing entirely to do what the Obligation says. Thus, it is one thing to refresh the mind with play and jest etc., because God has commanded it, and to refresh it neither more nor less than He has commanded, and another thing entirely to play and jest because it is pleasant, and because it is very agreeable: the one is the mark of the virtuous man, the other the mark of the immature and irrational man.

2. For unless we do this in its proper time and place, it will easily happen that for every obstacle we get rid of that could have delayed our office, we incur an equal, if not greater amount of ill-repute, which may impede us from correctly performing our office (inasmuch as a certain repute, or favour with the vulgar is required for it), and providing sustenance for ourselves. Certainly, as much grief can accrue to us from such ill-repute as pleasure and vigour from recreation of the mind.

3. These words are directed at Seneca.

4. These words are placed in the mouth of a virtuous man who shares my opinion.

5. With this, Justice again urges us to do no more and no less than is required by the end to which the Obligation is directed. Hence, the mind is to be refreshed in order that we may be equal to our office, and accordingly refreshed neither more nor less than is required for the efficient performance of the office. If we do either more or less, we shall be motivated not by office or Obligation but by our desire.

6. This Obligation is aptly compared to the cornice of a building, the preceding Obligations being like the floors of the House of Virtue. For the Sixth Obligation is the last of those founded on the Second Obligation. But this Obligation is quite accidental to them, and is not derived either by itself or on account of itself from the preceding Obligations (just as the cornice of a house is there as an ornament rather than out of necessity), for it has a place only when the business cannot otherwise be expedited. If someone who has to perform an office does not suffer delay from despondency, listlessness, and other afflictions of the mind, or though suffering from them, easily surmounts them by his own efforts, ignores them, and as it were tramples them underfoot, if such a one, I say, is so minded, he has no need for this Sixth Obligation, it is not incumbent upon him, as one who is by himself sufficiently firm and constant, to refresh his mind. But the earlier Obligations are derived in a more

necessary way from each other, and as it were on account of themselves, as there must be eating if there is to be living, and a mode of life must be sought if there is to be eating, and many things have to be borne if this mode of life is to be maintained. But though many things have to be borne, it is not so necessary for the mind to have frequent recreation, since it can sometimes happen that it is sufficiently firm and robust enough to bear many things, and is not in need of refreshment, which is required only by the feeble and infirm. And what I thus indicate here may on occasion be a reason for virtuous men why they think this Obligation is less appropriate at first sight and before they have examined it.

7. Allusion is again made to the now familiar comparison of this Sixth Obligation to the cornice of the House of Virtue; for one must have climbed aloft and be much advanced in Virtue to reach this Obligation, as it comes into consideration only when we have surmounted the others, and have as it were passed by them. If we should then fall in the course of fulfilling this Obligation, it will be exceedingly dangerous, as it is a fall from a high place.

8. The objection arises from the fact that the Sixth Obligation seems to abolish the distinction between virtuous men and vicious men, that is, so that we cannot tell them apart.

9. The response to that frivolous and vulgar objection, nevertheless so much in everyone's mouth, is simple. It is answered in this way, that virtuous men differ from vicious men not so much in external action as in intention, as that platitudinous but true saying has it:

*Whatever men do, they are all judged by their intention.**

10. In respect of actions we are warned to pay attention to the ultimate end, as it gives an action or effect its species within the genus of morals, and Aristotle justly remarks: *He who steals in order to gain possession of another man's wife is not a thief but an adulterer.*[†] So also, someone who refreshes his mind in order that he may obey God (and how it is that we can obey God by doing this, is clear enough from the continuous chain of Obligations) is said to love not his own refreshment but divine law; in a word, he is said not to

* *Quidquid agunt homines, intentio judicat omnes*: Latin saying of unknown origin. It also occurs with the alternative ending—*intentio salvat omnes*.

[†] Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea* V, 2, 1130 a 24–1130 a 28.

refresh himself but, strictly speaking, to obey God, just as, when a merchant casts his merchandise into the sea, he is said not so much to do this as to save himself.

11. Since the first objection turned above all on the assertion that, with the Sixth Obligation in place, virtuous men and vicious men do not differ from one another (to which the reply is that they differ in the formal sense, that is, as to intention, which is like the form of the moral act, even though in the material sense they may often not differ much; and that they differ in the material sense as to external actions and operations, which are like the matter of the moral act in question). But this next objection, as is shown, turns above all on the assertion that, with the Sixth Obligation in place, the mark by which we can distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men disappears. And to this second objection a threefold reply is made. First, that it matters little if we cannot distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men; second, that even with this Sixth Obligation removed, we would find it equally difficult to distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men; third, and last, that with the Sixth Obligation in place, we can still to some extent distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men, because though they often do the same, they still do it differently.

12. Note that the first part of the reply begins like this, namely, that it does not matter if we cannot distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men; we should be satisfied that we ourselves are virtuous. Hence, those who are inordinately anxious whether those with whom they are dealing are virtuous or vicious are probably not altogether virtuous themselves: you do not need such advisement in order to perform your office.

13. Note the second part of the reply, namely, that with the Sixth Obligation removed, we would not find it any easier to choose between virtuous men and vicious men, inasmuch as the latter usually know well how to affect austerity and dislike of recreation.

14. Note the third part of the reply, namely, that we can indeed distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men; for even though they may do the same, they still do it differently.

The Argument of § 9

The Argument of the Sixth Obligation is included in paragraph 5 of the text.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation.

1. Here, as in the preceding § 5, I introduce a division of the Obligations into those concerned with death (such as the first two Obligations), those concerned with life (such as the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth), and those concerned with birth (such as the Seventh Obligation). For every Obligation of man is concerned with either coming hither, being here, or departing hence; in short, with *hither*, *here*, or *hence*.

2. In case you should be tempted to believe that an embryo, as it is called when it has been formed in its mother's womb and has received its principal organs, such as the brain and the heart (which occurs round about the fortieth day from conception, or the carnal union of its parents) is an automaton, which is alive only in the sense that a brute or a plant is alive, and moves without consciousness or understanding, the sheer number of our prejudices, which we absorbed once from having been enclosed in our mother's womb, proves that an embryo is even then endowed with understanding, and is a true human being, enjoying a rational mind and a body. As it would take too long to recount here the prejudices that we absorbed from our mother's womb, let me refer you on this subject to my *Metaphysics*, or even to the inspection of oneself: thus, I shall speak in due course of these things in their proper place.¹¹

3. A law that is concerned with birth is posterior to birth, for what was before birth (if indeed there was anything, this having to remain undecided for the time being) is not subject to the human condition; and as for what we were subject to before our birth and incorporation, Reason has little or nothing to tell us. In this respect this Obligation is distinguished from the Obligation concerning death, for this whole Obligation is prior to death, with which our human condition expires.

¹¹ In fact, I have already spoken of them near the beginning of my *Aristotelian Metaphysics*, as also in my *Annotations to the Principles of the most illustrious Descartes*.*

* Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, Introduction, section 2, and *Annotata Latiora in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes*, esp. the commentary to Part 1, articles 66–71; *Opera* II, 200–204; and vol. 3, 405–418, respectively. The idea of sensation in embryos also occurs in the Introduction to the *Metaphysica ad Mentem Peripateticam*, *Opera* II, 203.

4. This law, or Seventh Obligation, is clearly based on the fundamental principle of Ethics: *Wherein you have no power, therein you should not will*. For since we can do absolutely nothing about our birth, or our being joined with a body, as emerged clearly in the Inspection of Ourselves, paragraph 12,* it is foolish and useless to will or desire anything regarding it other than is the case.

5. An objection to this Obligation, namely, that we seem justified in complaining of our birth, or coming into the world, since it is the reason why we are beset by such innumerable afflictions.

6. These afflictions are either of the body or the mind. The afflictions of the body turn on how easily the body can be injured; for the world is nothing other than Body in motion, as I showed in my *Physics*, but our body is a part of the world and is always being agitated by motion.† From that agitation come wounds; from wounds, pain, and often the failure of some organ or other, such as the eye or the ear; and again, as a frequent result of the collision of bodies, there is failure of the blood or air supply to the fire of the heart, in the absence of which that fire is bound to be extinguished; and with that fire extinguished, we are released from our body, that is, we die (see my *Physics*, the last part of the *Microcosm*).‡ And when we feel the onset of death, then truly almost unspeakable agonies oppress us, as all those on the verge of death (that is, sick unto death) know too well.

7. Next, the afflictions of the mind, which are of two kinds, consisting in a darkened intellect and corruption of will. The intellect is darkened when we do not begin our philosophising from a knowledge of ourselves; for all knowledge of truth must be derived from this source. As for corruption of will, when the will refuses to obey even a rather untainted mind, it has a rather more obscure source;

* I.e., Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 2, [12]. The original carries a mistaken reference to “paragraph 22”.

† In Treatise V of *Physica Vera*, Geulincx explains in purely Cartesian terms how the hypothesis of motion being imparted upon matter leads to the formation of the physical universe. The last Treatise on the “Microcosm” discusses the particular body that we regard as our own and by means of which we receive the impressions of other bodies. Cf. *Opera* II, 428–439 and 440–446, respectively. It is in his *Metaphysica Vera* that Geulincx argues that it is by making use of the various impressions on our bodies that God occasions the variety of sensations we experience. Cf. *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, “Scientia” 6–10, and Annotations, in *Opera* II, 150–155 and 268–271/*Metaphysics*, 36–43, and idem, *Preface*, 7–19.

‡ Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Physica Vera*, Treatise VI, § 9, *Opera* II, 446.

but it seems most likely that it arises from the fact that we are distracted by our sensations in such a variety of ways. As a result, the dictate of the mind is as it were blotted out and erased, and the spirit does not pay sufficient attention to it. But these matters will be clarified when I come to speak of the Passions.* See also my *Annotations on Descartes*, especially Part I, § 71.†

8. Nothing is more common with the vulgar than to pray to God to make things better for them; and what is this but to want God to serve them? As we shall see in Treatise IV, when we come to deal with Piety, it is reasonable to pray to God to supply us with the faculties we need in order to nourish ourselves and survive; but we must not leave it at that. The right reason for praying to God is not in order that we may nourish ourselves and survive, but in order that by nourishing ourselves and surviving, we may do what He has commanded us, He who has commanded us to survive, and to remain here until he releases us. And so it is never permissible to pray to God for any reason other than that we may fulfil the Obligations that He has imposed on us. These matters are clarified in Treatise II.‡

9. Namely, I am always conscious that my mind is not stable in its intention to serve God and fulfil its Obligations. For all the things that are known to my consciousness are equally well-known, being known in the highest possible degree, that is, exceedingly well-known. There is, no doubt, a certain order in the things that present themselves to my consciousness; but none of them has any greater clarity than any other. See Part I of my *Metaphysics*.§

10. I have spoken of our afflictions: I now enquire into their causes. Three causes are considered: the first of them Platonic, the second, Christian, and the third, coming from an unknown person, though it may be ascribed to the very author of this Treatise. These causes are considered in a tentative manner, inasmuch as to enquire

* Cf. Treatise IV, below.

† Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Annotata Latiora in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes, Opera* III, 411–418.

‡ Cf. Treatise II, Part III, § 9, *On Piety*.

§ A discussion of the clarity of ideas as such does not occur in the *Metaphysica Vera*, although it is explained in *Metaphysica Vera*, Part 1, “Quarta Scientia”, that the crucial difference between the various things known to consciousness, is that they may be dependent either on consciousness itself or on something else. Cf. *Opera* II, 149–150/*Metaphysics*, 34.

into causes is not the subject-matter of Ethics, whose office can be summed up as: wherein one has no power, therein one should not will; and what one cannot avert, to consider it to be for the best.

11. This is the cause offered by Plato: we have sinned in another life, he says; we are paying the penalty in this life, and it is all the greater inasmuch as we do not know for which sin we are paying it.*

12. This is the doctrine of Christians, as for which, indeed, I do not doubt that it is true, but it is, however, considered as a matter of doubt in Ethics, since it cannot effectively be proved in the light of nature.†

13. The superiority of the Christian doctrine; namely, experience supports Christians. For it is our experience that the vices of parents flow into their children; so that if a father is a drunkard, a child may be born to him who is similarly given over to the bottle:

When ruinous gambling is the old man's pleasure, his youthful heir also plays, handling his weapon as if shaking a little dice-box: such is nature's course.‡

There is no support of this kind for Plato, who says that we have all sinned on our own account before we were cast into the prison-house of our bodies to be punished.

14. This is the third reply, which indeed does not adduce the cause that the question demands, but overturns the question itself. For the question was: whence these afflictions? I reply, that they are

* Cf. Plato, *Phaedo*, 81 b–82 b, 107 b–107 d, and *Phaedrus*, 248 c–249 b.

† The idea that original sin involves character traits handed down by parents to their children is by no means the standard Christian interpretation. According to the seventeenth-century Calvinist authority Gisbertus Voetius (1589–1676) for instance, original sin is not a genetic defect passed down from one generation to the next, but rather a form of corruption universal to the human race on account of the obscurity of the understanding and the undisciplined and rebellious character of the will. Cf. Gisbertus Voetius and Samuel Lydius [*respondens*], *De Propagatione Peccati Originalis*, an academic disputation defended at Utrecht University on 2 July 1636, in Gisbertus Voetius, *Disputationes Selectae*, Part 1, Utrecht: Johannes a Waesberge, 1648, 1078–1118. Note, however, that Geulincx himself brought up the theologically complex notion of the corruption of the will as something that “has a rather more obscure source” in Annotation 7, above, and that he further discusses the corruption of the will in Annotation 15, below.

‡ Juvenal, *Saturae* XIV, 4–5 and 31. On the question of the Christian interpretation of original sin, see also the former footnote.

not afflictions, and so the question is overturned and abolished. The argument of this reply is that an affliction is something that happens to us to which we are not minded; but now, if we abandon ourselves (as Humility dictates), nothing will come of all the things mentioned above which will appear to happen to us contrary to how we are minded. When I say *contrary to how we are minded*, I do not deny that it could happen contrary to our sensations and passions;* but I say that you must not regard it as an affliction because it is contrary to our sensations and passions. It is certain that there is no place within us for any affliction unless it becomes something to which we are not minded: thus, we often take pleasure in the exhaustion and pain of the body rather than fend them off, so long as they are not things to which we are not minded, even though they are contrary to our sensations and passions.

15. Thus, it does not seem surprising if I wipe away all afflictions, and say that they cannot fall upon the virtuous, that is, the humble man. But even in this there is a considerable difficulty if we decline to say that corruption of will itself, which we accounted an affliction, involves some misery.† Nevertheless, when we examine the matter carefully, it does not appear that such corruption strikes the virtuous man as an affliction: for he never approves of that evil propensity of his mind; in fact, he always reprobates it, and at such time as he should happen to fall into sin because of it, he straightaway withdraws, and with remorse and self-loathing recoils from himself as much as lies within his power. Hence, just as when a stick that is partly immersed in water and partly projecting into the air appears bent, error is imputed only to children, who acquiesce mentally in it, and not to adults, who reject it under the instruction of Reason, so corruption is imputed only to an acquiescent and approving mind, and not to one that rejects and forswears it.

16. Here follows the true reply to the first question that was asked, which is offered positively and with assurance, whereas the three earlier replies were only tentatively offered. However, this reply also cancels out the very question, just like the third of the preceding replies; but while the third reply overturned the question by showing that what the question appeared to presuppose is false (for the

* Cf. Annotation 14, 204–206, above, as well as Treatise V, § 2, on *Happiness*.

† Cf. Annotation 7, as well as our note to Annotation 12, above.

question presupposed certain afflictions to affect the virtuous man, asking why those afflictions fall upon him, and the third reply denied that afflictions are found in the virtuous man), this reply overturns the question as a violation of Ethics. For we should seek nothing that is not deduced from the principles of humility, in particular those deriving from disregard of oneself; and seeking to know why afflictions fall upon us does not derive from disregard of oneself. Someone who asks such a question implies that he wants to be rid of them; but this is to seek oneself, whom disregard of oneself has dismissed and given over.

17. I mean, the three earlier replies that were tentatively offered.

18. Disregard of oneself, neglect and abandonment of oneself, whereby we leave everything to God, taking no care of ourselves, are the chief source of humility. From this source as such it does not follow that we should enquire into the cause of our afflictions. Either they are afflictions (as they seem to be to the vulgar), or they are not (as wiser heads and some Philosophers have realised); and if they are afflictions, whether they are so from this or that cause, it matters little, for the humble man holds that that is no affair of his. Having recognised that they are just a part of the human condition, he carries on, and puts up with things that seem harsh to the vulgar, regarding with resignation whatever befalls him.

19. That is, whether we should not sometimes enquire why those afflictions fall upon us?

20. Namely, in Ethics, where we have deduced only what natural light shows us.

21. That is, whether we should not in other circumstances (for instance, in Theology and the Christian Religion) enquire why those afflictions fall upon us?

22. A brief recapitulation of all the Obligations, and all the propositions that we have examined in the light of those Obligations.

23. I allude here to the Seventh Obligation. With this I give myself to God as one who was born into the world, inasmuch as I approve and acquiesce in my birth, and would not have it otherwise.

24. I allude here to the First Obligation. With this I give myself to God as one who will die, inasmuch as I acquiesce in it, and am not reluctant to die.

25. I allude here to the Second Obligation. With this I give myself to God as one who lives, inasmuch as I acquiesce in it, and am not reluctant to remain until He releases me.

26. I allude here to the Third, Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Obligations, which are all concerned with the effort that is needed to obtain nourishment and remain here.

27. The argument of the second Appendix is stated here.* Namely, if I take upon myself an Obligation that is not justified by Reason, I shall be obeying not the Obligation but my own credulity and frivolity; for what we do not hold by Reason, we do not hold at all. See my *Saturnalia*, and elsewhere.† If, then, the Obligation I assume is a genuine Obligation, but I do not have a reasonable conviction that it is a genuine Obligation, and that it is incumbent on me, it will thereby not be an Obligation of mine. Accordingly, even if I obey it, I shall not obey it in the proper sense, I shall obey that frivolity and caprice of mine with which I assumed it. Just as a dreamer who, for example, grasps a golden apple presented to him in his dream does not really grasp it, but only some insubstantial phantom and dream, so, as long as we grasp an Obligation to which we have been led not by Reason, but by some caprice of ours, by our credulity, and by the faith that we put in other men, we make time not for the Obligation but for our caprices and credulity.

28. This is the other argument of the second Appendix. The first argument was: if I take upon myself an Obligation that Reason does not impose, I make time not for Reason, not for God, not for my Obligation, but for my folly and caprice. The second argument (which is stated here) is that there is no need to hunt and fish for Obligations in caprices, fancies, credulity, and in the faith that we put in other men, when all those Obligations are presented to us by God through natural light in a sufficiently clear and obvious manner.

29. In case anyone should think that it follows from this and from things said earlier that God does not advise us of our office through the medium of other men, it is appropriate to add here that plainly

* The reference to a “second Appendix” may be explained by the fact that neither the summary of obligations at the beginning of [4] (which may be seen as a first Appendix), nor these further remarks on misconceived obligations properly belong to the subject matter of § 10, i.e., the seventh obligation to look upon one’s birth as something good and never to lament or curse it.

† In the Commentary to his *Quaestiones Quodlibeticae* address of 14 December 1652, Geulinx defends Reason against empiricism, against arguments from authority and against enthusiasm, maintaining that ‘Reason’ always ‘comes first’. A more elaborate discussion of Reason is found in the *Logica fundamentis suis restituta*, Part 4, Section 2. Cf. *Opera* I, 58 and 421 ff., respectively.

He quite often does advise us through others; but nevertheless, whenever He does so, He puts arguments into the mouths of those advisers and teachers whereby we understand that the law which they exhort us to follow was enacted by Him.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 11. The Adminicle of Humility.

1. In every utterance of men, in their every opinion and saying, they diffuse that ubiquitous desire for their own Blessedness and happiness. You may hear always in their prognostications concerning matters of great moment such sentiments as these: *Happiness and good luck to all!* And again, *Let things turn out well!* Wherever they are, they give greetings which they expect to be returned in kind, such as every day, *Good morning! Good night!* etc., with which they wish upon those whom they affect what they know themselves to seek above all, namely, happiness. But they ought rather to say: *Know thyself, and so abandon thyself and all that it entails; and embrace thy Obligations.* Plato once upon a time, albeit confusedly, acknowledged such a greeting to be the only good and right one. See what was said concerning this in the Inspection of Oneself.*

2. It is not to be wondered at that we cannot obtain lasting pleasure, or Blessedness, unless we satisfy our Obligations: this is because, since we have no power, we should not will; for it is folly, and in consequence, utter misery, to struggle against them (as is self-evident). Accordingly, if anyone has a care of himself and defers in some respect to his happiness, he must of necessity fall short of his Obligations, at least those which derive from abandonment and lack of care of himself. And if he has a care of his own happiness, he clearly violates that principle, for he has a particular care of himself.

3. It is remarkable how many have gone astray here, carried away by excessive zeal. For having perceived (something that Reason easily teaches anyone who pays a little attention) that we ought to do nothing on account of our comforts and pleasures, they understood it in the sense that we should flee our pleasures and comforts, and positively shut them away from us. Hence, they unjustifiably imposed on themselves fasting and scourging, and similar things dreamt up by perverted piety and superstition. But right and sound Reason,

* Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 2, [1], and the footnotes to page 31, above.

which is content with negative disregard, by no means teaches this. See what I said about Humility in Section II, § 1, 2, and 3.* Thus, as we shall conclude later, happiness must not be courted, but neither must it be shut away; we must conduct ourselves negatively here, making time only for our Obligations, and leaving our comforts, pleasures, and solaces in abeyance. When they come, give thanks to God (as we shall see in Treatise II); when they do not come, do not seek them out.

4. Again I tilt at those world-weary voluptuaries, of whom I spoke in the Inspection of Oneself, § 2, paragraph 12, who flee from pleasure in order that they may better pursue more intense pleasure. For a pleasure deferred, and catching one by surprise, is usually more intense: in fact, those who have a strong taste for it esteem no pleasure that is not obtained by study and art. But,

—*Pleasure bought with pain is unpleasant.*†

5. It is clear from this how absurd is the supposition that God has commanded us to work for our eternal Blessedness, inasmuch as it is self-defeating. For if God commanded such an absurd thing, he would not command anything at all; since an action undertaken by us at the command of God to pursue Blessedness would not in the strict sense be to pursue Blessedness but to execute God's commands; for it is the ultimate end that gives moral action its character, not an intermediate end. Hence, the aforesaid action is concerned not with happiness but with Divine law. Add to this that we can renounce a right introduced in our favour (which all laws presuppose, and Reason makes quite clear to everyone). Therefore, even if a law on our own happiness were to be laid down for us, we would not commit an offence by renouncing that law; and it is a monstrosity of a law that can be broken without committing an offence, in fact it is no law.

6. It can be proved from the nature of God that it is not permissible for us to do anything on account of our happiness: to look to one's happiness and to be intent on it is permissible only to Him who is by nature the Supreme Being; for He has nothing outside

* Geulincx' criticisms of a positive neglect of oneself in fact occur in Treatise I, Chapter II, Section II, § 1, [1] and § 6, [4]. See 29–30 and 46–48, above.

† Horace, *Epistolae* I, 2, 55.

Himself to which He may aspire, but necessarily reposes in Himself and refers all things to Himself. As for the rest, just as He is by nature supreme, so they are by nature inferior and subject, and do have something outside themselves to which they may aspire, that is, to that Supreme One whom they approach with steps of obedience. For it is certain that he who is a servant, inasmuch as he is a servant, cannot dedicate himself to his own cause; therefore, the office of service is always incumbent on us, who are by nature servants of God, and service completely excludes the respect and contemplation of the convenience of him who serves, and leaves respect and contemplation of it to Him alone who is served. For what is servitude but to have a care of the things of him who is served, to transact his business, and to consult his interests? On this, see the marginal annotations in the Dutch version, where I indicated that there are three ways in which we may demonstrate that it is not permissible for us to consult our own happiness: the first, from the definition of Virtue; the second, from the definition and nature of ourselves; and the third, from the definition and nature of God.*

7. It is no coincidence that with the virtuous man happiness is not an Operative End, but a Natural End, which acts according to its nature, and tends to his greatest happiness. However, it does not follow that he acts in order to be happy: he acts in order to serve God (whose natural servant he is). And I distinguish sharply between those ends, as Treatise III will make clear. It is made very clear in Seneca's book *On the Blessed Life*, Chapter 7: *Just as in a field that has been sown with corn, some fine flowers spring up among the corn, yet, though they are a delight to the eyes, have nothing to do with the crop, and are merely a by-product of the work and come in addition to it, the intention of him who sows them being quite otherwise; so pleasure is not the wages or the cause of virtue, but something that comes with it; and it does not please because it delights, but delights because it pleases.*†

8. This question merits consideration. For since it is quite evident, and very easily gathered by anyone who pays the least attention,

* Cf. the marginal note in Arnout Geulincx, *Van de Hoof-deuchden: De eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, Leiden: Philips de Croy, 1667/*Van de Hoof-deuchden: De Eerste Tucht-verhandeling*, ed. J.P.N. Land, Antwerpen – Gent – 's Gravenhage: Buschmann – Hoste – Nyhoff, 1895, 218–220/Arnout Geulincx, *Van de hoofddeugden: De eerste tuchtverhandeling*, ed. Cornelis Verhoeven, Geschiedenis van de wijsbegeerte in Nederland 10, Baarn: Ambo, 1986, 144–145, second note to page 127.

† Seneca, *De vita beata ad Gallionem*, Chapter 9, § 2.

that it is not permissible for us to trouble about our happiness, why is it that all those who always trouble about their happiness do not keep quiet about it or pretend not to trouble about it, but make a point of saying that this is what they do, and are always eager to persuade others to act in the same way? The reply to the question that was asked is this, that men believe, led on by an unacknowledged and deceitful conviction, that humankind is their God; which, even though they may expressly deny it in words, yet inwardly and within the recesses of their mind they are so infected by it that they seem unable to persuade themselves otherwise.

9. The reason is, that humankind is above all devoted to the senses, that men are devoted to their sensations and forget everything else. When the former conviction, that humankind is supreme (that is, is God) has become established, they then easily convince themselves that they themselves can be supreme, believing that they can surpass all other men, especially in empire and power. And now, with this latter conviction, that they can be supreme, also established, they easily fall into the error of believing that they ought to consider their own happiness first and foremost: for this is what really distinguishes one who is supreme, and him alone, that he considers his own happiness, while it falls to the rest to be anxious about Obligations.

10. Those beautifully abstruse arguments by which man conceives his race to be supreme, and that he can have dominion over it, are like a love-potion, out of which, once drained, flow in turn all the excesses enumerated in the text.

11. Once we have learned from inspection of ourselves which things are ours and which are God's, and in particular, that we do not create the motion of our organs, that the eye essentially brings nothing to seeing, that the world cannot of its own accord reveal itself to our gaze, and that all these things are done by the ineffable power of someone else; once, I say, we have come to see ourselves as we really are through inspecting these and suchlike things, the vulgar call us insane, holding that this business of self-inspection leads to stark raving madness, not to wisdom.

12. In ancient times, as now, almost all physicians placed insanity in an excess of black bile. Hence, 'black bile' is often used as a synonym for 'insanity'.

13. It is clearly the case; and anyone who has been in the habit of inspecting himself cannot pay too much attention to the procedure

recommended in this Treatise, but on the contrary should use it frequently, inspecting himself over and over again with that supreme pleasure born out of the sure and certain harvest of wisdom and spiritual strength, to the ever more luscious perception of which he continually turns his mind.

14. Philaretus is here imagined as an associate and disciple of the author, journeying through this Treatise as if through a foreign country, a country in which there is a district of principal importance, the one which consists of § 2 *Inspection of Oneself*. Furthermore, the author would have Philaretus tread over and over again the field that he trod once before, that is, inspect himself more and more often.

15. For the author has rowed back somewhat from his design, in order to bring together certain topics involved in inspection of oneself and heap them up into a mound, from which, while he ascends, he may view that field, namely, inspection of oneself, as if from a great height.

16. Here again we return to our design, which was to fashion an Adminicle of Humility; and it was, *not to do anything on account of our happiness*; on which we posted a warning that neither should we do anything in order to avoid happiness. Those two points will be recalled briefly at the beginning of paragraph 4; after which we will pass to other matters.

17. We should pray to God for one reason, and one reason only, namely, that we may fulfil our Obligations; thanks are to be given for two things, namely, that we have done our part in fulfilling our Obligations, and that He vouchsafes some happiness to us. It is not permissible to pray to God on account of this last cause, but only to give thanks when He vouchsafes it. All this will become clear in the next Treatise when I discuss Piety towards God. Thus, a certain Obligation is supposed here (namely, giving thanks to God) of which up till now no mention has been made, the reason for which will become clear when I come to speak of Piety.

18. It is appropriate here to append a definition of happiness, for since a great deal has now been said about happiness, it is worthwhile to know in what it fundamentally consists. And it consists in the pure pleasure arising from consciousness of having fulfilled our Obligations, and in particular, of having abandoned ourselves, and made ourselves over entirely to God. Other pleasures, such as those of carnal love, or those that come from eating and drinking, always

have something sad about them, indeed more sadness than joy, and leave behind an intolerable regret, similar to a bad itch, which if you scratch it you experience a little pleasure and excitement, but invariably in the long run more misery and discomfort. And who would wish a bad itch on himself for the sake of the pleasure of scratching it? He would rightly say: *I will not purchase regret at such an inordinate cost.*

19. I hint at the distinction between these true joys, which are usually accompanied by profound silence, and false, or fleshly joys, which roister, shout, and swagger, and are full of commotion and tumult.

20. A timely warning, that when we extol pleasure in this way, we must at all times take care lest we begin to direct our actions towards obtaining it; and no mere formality in the case of certain ill-advised persons, who are more attached to the size and weight of the rewards that come in virtue's train than to virtue itself and Divine Law; and this is how it happens that they miss the rewards as well.

21. That is, it is the ultimate end that gives moral action its character. Accordingly, someone who serves Divine Law for his own end cares not for Divine Law but for himself; just as a man who steals in order that he may gain another man's wife is not a thief but an adulterer, as I cited earlier from Aristotle.*

22. These things are what almost all men would say; for they pursue virtue almost entirely on account of their pleasure and comfort, as Epicurus anciently observed very well. But when he went on to say that men should behave like this because they commonly *do* behave like this, he was gravely in error.

23. A dilemma: I act either on account of God's law or on account of my pleasure; if on account of God's law, there is no cause for complaint when I do not have pleasures that I did not want to have; if on account of those same pleasures, there is also no cause for complaint, because I have done nothing to deserve those pleasures. For such pleasures belong to virtue; and when I acted on account of those pleasures, I did not exercise virtue. Accordingly, the following reproach is both clearly justified and full of manly consolation: Do you complain that you are bereft of spiritual pleasure? You have no cause for complaint: for you did the right thing either in order

* See the note to Annotation 10 on page 275, above.

to fulfil God's law, or in order to obtain pleasure for yourself; if the latter, you do not deserve pleasure; if the former, why do you complain that you do not have, and lack, what you did not seek? Most other consolations are likely to be dangerous and effeminate: the danger is that we may impel and lead to his downfall someone who is already stumbling and inclining towards pleasure and ease (for one who complains that he is bereft of spiritual pleasure is certainly in such a state).

24. For virtue that is cultivated to that end is not virtue, but self-love; and accordingly it is not surprising if it fails to deliver those pleasures that are peculiar to virtue.

25. The nature of pleasure furnishes another reason. For someone who has made an effort to obtain pleasure has detracted from its full flavour: pleasure is most welcome when it comes to someone who is not expecting it, and is otherwise engaged. It is no wonder, then, that they who cultivate virtue for the sake of pleasure and spiritual joy never attain such genuine and satisfying pleasure as those who, valuing such joy less, and not paying any attention to it, merely do what has to be done, and make time for Divine law for its own sake. It is these seemingly inattentive persons, looking outwards and otherwise engaged, who are infused with spiritual pleasure that is all the more pleasant for having been more unexpected and less the object of their affections. There are now, therefore, two reasons why those who cultivate virtue for the sake of happiness do not attain such happiness. The first reason follows from the nature of Virtue; for virtue cultivated for the sake of happiness is not virtue, and accordingly is not attended by those rewards that belong essentially to virtue. The other reason follows from the nature of Happiness; for happiness lacks its full flavour when it lacks the unexpected and the undesired, and accordingly is not true happiness.

26. I have already spoken in paragraph 2 of this § 11 of those pleasure-hunters who chase pleasure with consummate ingenuity by fleeing from it. For the greater the ingenuity with which we pursue something, the more sadly, the more bitterly, and the more ridiculously in the eyes of others, we are disappointed. Hence, while those who pursue happiness directly are simply disappointed by it, those who pursue it indirectly are all at sea, and not only are they disappointed of their happiness, but over and above this their disappointment brings more bitterness to them, and incurs the ridicule of others.

To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 12. The Fruit of Humility.

1. The fruit of humility is to be uplifted; disregard of oneself is clothed with the greatest honour, dignity, and esteem; the fruit of not caring about one's own happiness is the greatest care and the greatest concern of God Himself for that happiness, that is, to lavish that happiness upon us.

2. The allusion is to Pandora's box, humility being here likened to Pandora.

3. That is, when they pay too much regard to the rewards of virtue, and especially of Humility, and fall in love with those rewards, they begin to pursue virtue not for its own sake, but for the sake of its rewards. But this is to lapse altogether from virtue, and to abandon it in favour of the corruption of self-love, and in short, to drift into sin itself, and as a result to be swept into all the afflictions and miseries that sin brings with it as a matter of course.

4. The reply made here is to the question just posed; and it is that the fruit of Humility is deadly poison to men when they are so attracted by it that they fall in love with it, and cultivate virtue in order to obtain it.

5. The fruit of humility is not essentially poisonous, but only accidentally; for its fruit is by its very nature our one and only happiness, but is accidentally turned by us into poison when we fall in love with it, and must have it for ourselves, as I have now shown many times in this Treatise.

6. I have stated what the fruit of Humility consists of; here with a few brief apostrophes I show in an even more vigorous and lively fashion that it really is the fruit of humility.

7. For if someone has abandoned himself, and has no regard for himself, he can have no greater regard for anything than God. Someone who has departed from himself has nowhere to go except to Reason, or God's law: so long as he has not yet come to that, he still clings to himself, he is still busy with his own affairs, he still troubles about himself. If someone does not act because Reason dictates it, he has no other reason for acting than because it pleases him; there is no middle ground between these two positions, and whatever we do on purpose (which alone is the subject of morals) we do either because Reason dictates it or because it pleases us. No doubt it is often both what Reason dictates and what pleases us, but it is not *what is done* but *why you do it* that makes it virtue or vice. Hence, when you act both because it pleases you and because Reason

dictates it, and therefore not merely because Reason dictates it, you sin. In fact, if it pleases you to obey Reason, and you therefore obey because it pleases you, you again sin, and your action is not a virtuous but a vicious action. Therefore, to depart from oneself in the least degree is to go to God, and to be in God. Thus, the humble man, that is, the man who has abandoned himself, or departed from himself, is now already with God, and is so at home with the Sublime that it is as if he himself were sublime.

8. For only the meanest and vilest of men would not return the love of another by whom he sees himself to be sincerely loved; which is not something of which one can accuse the Divinity, who is beyond all measure the most generous of all beings. From this the conclusion necessarily follows that if you love God, He will also love you in return.

9. That is, the other kinds of love have no place in God and His law, as you can see in § 1 of this Treatise, paragraphs 6 and 7. More on this will be said later, when I come to speak of Ends and means.

10. That is, He cannot be the object of Passionate Love, as it cannot be sensed by Him, since He is incorporeal; and much less can He have an Obedient Love for me, since as one who is by nature my Lord He can never obey me.

11. Thus, it has been shown that the virtuous man, that is, the humble man, is loved by God with such great Benevolent Love that greater love towards him God Himself cannot conceive. From this it manifestly follows that on the part of God nothing can be thought more blessed than such a virtuous man.

12. The praise of humility couched in a poetic or fabulous form. The explanation or mythology of this fable is very easy for anyone to understand who has given some time to turning over this little Treatise in his mind.

13. When Humility (that is, not caring about oneself) has come to join Diligence, that is, listening to Reason, Diligence immediately changes somewhat, and comes to consist entirely in listening. Someone who does not care about himself does not make laws for things, but merely hears and listens to the law that God has inscribed on things. For there is an insidious and hidden temptation that induces men to say something about things that they do not receive from the things themselves. Coveting God's power and everything that belongs to God, and driven by a kind of unacknowledged envy that they themselves scarcely understand, they want to claim them for themselves. But it is for God alone to make laws for things that He

Himself does not receive from things; it is not for us to make laws for things, only to read the laws inscribed on them. For example, Body, that is, what is extended, is also divisible, or does not admit of penetration or replication, and many similar laws that Physicists and Metaphysicians demonstrate that Body necessarily obeys. God has made for Body these laws that he has somehow inscribed on it with His divine finger: it is then indeed for us to enquire into them, to read them, and to listen to them; but to make a law for Body (for example, that it should be bounded, and that its extension should terminate somewhere) that we do not find inscribed on it, that Body itself does not suggest to us, this is not for us, and inasmuch as we affect this kind of thing we affect a kind of Divinity. The same thing happens in Ethics when we inflict upon ourselves an Obligation that Reason has not imposed. See paragraph 4 of the Seventh Obligation. Hence, Humility ensures that Diligence never speaks, that it remains altogether mute, as if it has had its tongue cut out; nor does it ever claim anything for itself, but listens and pays keen attention to what God has said, taking careful note of the laws that it sees engraved on things by God, and never interposing anything of its own.

14. For when Humility, or not caring about oneself, has come to join Obedience, or the execution of Reason, Obedience then sees nothing further, but merely allows itself to be led blindly by Reason. It is led by no consideration for itself, nor does it regard its own convenience, but merely executes what Reason has prescribed: that it should bid farewell to every other consideration. Moreover, the blindness of Obedience is most conspicuous when it comes to the Rewards of Virtue, which do not attract it, and which it does not regard, and to the Penalties of Sin, which it neither avoids nor regards, merely following Virtue itself, the law of God, or Reason. Hence, it is appropriate to call it blind, as it sees nothing where men believe that they should be all eyes. The virtuous, or obedient man has learned of the rewards that attend him when he does well, and of the penalties that might attend him if he does otherwise; but this prospect does not enter into his obedience; he behaves towards such things merely speculatively, not practically, he does not let them affect his purpose, but tells them to stay out of his sight. See in this § 12, paragraph 2, the kind of blind obedience that most men have acknowledged as if by a natural instinct, but that some of them have quite misapplied when they wished to serve certain men, and to submit in a blind way to their leadership. Of them it is well said

that, *When the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.** True obedience, however, though in itself blind, still follows Wisdom and Prudence, which are born out of Diligence, with its eyes very much open (in fact, not only with its eyes open, but itself a very eye). Hence, it is in no danger of stumbling.

15. When Humility, or not caring about oneself, has come to join Justice, it has this effect, that Justice becomes altogether fixed, never inclining either to more or to less. If someone is led by no care of himself, he will do neither more nor less than Reason dictates: for that *more* and *less* always arise from Self-love. Since Reason dictates this *not more, not less*, if you do either more or less you necessarily do it for the sake of your own desires. And you behold here the very face of self-love, care of oneself, the enemy of Humility.

16. That is, he must turn as much as ever to inspection of himself, and be engaged in it. For in this inspection we must understand the entire Field for which Philaretus has already departed in § 11, paragraph 3, and from which he is conceived as not having yet returned.

17. For Philaretus is our zealous lover of virtue; though for the prudent man zeal is often not enough (as is quite often the case with the zealous). This is clear from his objections to the Sixth Obligation in paragraphs 3 and 4 of § 9, where we see him carrying on the work of being virtuous with great keenness but too little prudence.

18. That is, Diligence, Obedience, and Justice (which here come under the names of Goddesses) do not have their full nature and meaning until Humility comes to join them. For Diligence without Humility will be devoted to its own interests; and this is not Diligence but vanity. Obedience without Humility will regard itself and its own interests; and this is not Obedience but servility to oneself. Justice without Humility will incline sometimes to *more*, sometimes to *less*, according as its desire or the logic of its own convenience demands; and this is not Justice but fickleness and utter lack of resolution.

19. That is, Obedience is led by Reason, or the *Logos*; and this is the father of Obedience, Virtue being its mother. For Virtue is the love of Reason, a love that is consummated by embracing Reason, and engenders the Cardinal Virtues. Thus, Reason here plays the role of Father in the allegory of the Cardinal Virtues.

* St. Matthew 15: 14. Cf. Grynaeus, 112: *Caecus caeco dux*.

20. Philaretus himself has departed, but among the spectators there is someone resembling him, who is accordingly called his brother. He too is a zealous but inadequately prudent lover of virtue, and believes it to be indecorous to compose a play on the virtues, such as is here represented on the stage.

21. He is thinking of the *Aediles*, who in ancient times mounted the Games, and presented popular entertainments.

22. Here, the author replies to the objection that the brother of Philaretus has made. And the reply is, that he should pay less attention to the fable that is offered here than to the mythology and the explanation of the fable. The author does not, however, supply this mythology, knowing that it is readily available to those who are even moderately acquainted with the contents of this Treatise.

*The Argument of § 12, amounting to a summary
of the whole of Treatise I*

The subject of this Treatise is Humility; though it is not entitled thus, and that for good reason. For it is necessary that anyone who would speak of the Cardinal Virtues should speak chiefly of Humility. And it is proved in four ways (there do not appear to be any more) that we ought to be humble, that is, without care or consideration of ourselves or our happiness. The first two proofs are derived from the definition of Virtue. I showed that since Virtue is the love of Reason, and love cannot be bestowed on two things, it follows that the love of Reason does not permit of love of ourselves. The second proof is that we cannot love Reason, which is a law, if we love ourselves, since a law, as such, is not addressed to the good of him to whom it is given, but to an Obligation. These, then, are two of the proofs. The third proof is derived from the definition and nature of ourselves, the definition that is included in the inspection of ourselves, from which we inferred that, since we have no power, neither should we will, that is, we should cast aside all care of ourselves. The fourth proof is derived from the nature of God: for since He is essentially a Lord, He alone can consider His own happiness; it is for us to serve. See the Annotation to § 12, paragraph 2.*

* Geulincx may be thinking of Annotation 13, 292–293, above. See, however, also Annotation 6 to § 11, [3], 285–286, above, and the reference there to the marginal notes of the Dutch version.

An Alternative Summary of Treatise I

I want to do what Reason dictates (I am *virtuous*); I then listen to what Reason says (I am *diligent*); then I do it because Reason says so (I am *obedient*); I then also do only that thing (I am *just*); lastly, I am led by no care of myself (I am *humble*). When I turn myself away from outward things, and look inwards, the parts of Diligence are here observed. When I act because Reason says so, do what Reason dictates, and do not do what Reason forbids, the parts of Obedience are observed. When I do only that, neither more nor less, the parts of Justice are observed, one of them being *purity*, the other, *perfection*. In order that I may not care about myself, I inspect myself, and because in doing this I see that I can do nothing, neither do I will anything (and the parts of Humility are observed, one of them being called *inspection of myself*, the other, *disregard of myself*). In order that I may rightly perceive Reason, I keep company with it, I dedicate myself to it where it is easy, and I remind myself of what I already know well (and for me this is the *adminicle of diligence*). In order that I may do what Reason dictates, I break the habit of doing what men dictate (and for me this is the *adminicle of obedience*). In order that I may do only that, I consider the nature of things, and impress firmly on myself that when there is a little bit lacking, or too much, a thing is not what it is said to be (and so I have made use of the *adminicle of justice*). In order that I may not care about myself, I resolve not to trouble about the reward of virtue and the penalty of sin, and to make the whole of my action and inaction dependent on the law of God (and so I have made use of the *adminicle of humility*). When I listen to Reason, I at length perceive what it says, and become *wise* (and this is the *reward of diligence*). When I do what Reason dictates, I am *free*, and now no longer serve any man (and this is the *reward of obedience*). When I do only what Reason dictates, I do enough, and am *fulfilled* (and this is the *reward of justice*). When, not caring about myself, I abandon myself, *God Himself accepts me* (and this is the *reward of humility*).

To Treatise II. § 6. Intemperance and Stupor.

1. It is mostly the rich, and those whom the vulgar believe to be happy (that is, abounding in favourable things) who are given to this latter kind of Intemperance; the former kind of Intemperance infects mostly the poor, and those who are afflicted by adversities. Hence, it seems that there can be Intemperance even amidst adversities, and

indeed, that it is then usually at its most intense, in the form of an overwhelming desire for, and love of favourable things. In these circumstances Temperance can also be found; for virtuous men who are in the midst of adversities are for this very reason the most temperate of all, in that they do not desire favourable things (not that they flee from them, either; away with that fanatical kind of Temperance of some!), but embrace only their Obligation, and are content with that. But now you are confronted by a difficulty: how, then, can Temperance be defined as *virtue amidst favourable things*? It seems we must now concede that Temperance can also be found amidst adversities. Again, I said quite explicitly as early as in the Introduction to Treatise I: *for amidst adversities there is no room for Temperance, amidst favourable things there is no room for Fortitude*. The reply is not so difficult as might appear at first glance; for Virtue is also concerned even amidst favourable things, when it is concerned about them mentally and in thought (even though favourable things may in fact hold no charms for Virtue, or it does not itself possess them); and Virtue then provides an occasion for Temperance by not desiring any of the favourable things that may come to mind. Besides which, just as the kind of vice that amidst favourable things concerns itself with enjoying them, better deserves the name of Intemperance than desiring and loving favourable things amidst adversities, so Temperance engaged amidst favourable things, but by no means enjoying them, better deserves the name of Virtue than despising favourable things while set amidst adversities.

2. Hence, Aristotelians are stunted and defective Stoics. The Stoics contended that pleasure, and in general all Passions, should be banished or disabled; while the Aristotelians wanted all of them to be emasculated and mutilated, which they called moderating the Passions, that is, withdrawing some part of them.

To Treatise III. § 3. The Beneficent End and the Obedient End.

1. This is why, among men, servants do not usually serve masters, nor citizens their magistrates, so far as intention is concerned (which is the most important here); though men are able to content themselves with such external service, inasmuch as they require the act more than the spirit of the act, and desire it more than the Obligation. But to apply a similar consideration to God and His law cannot be regarded as anything but extremely improper. To want to obey God in order that things may go well with you is to serve

not God but yourself. And God cannot content Himself with the kind of external services that content men, but requires from us, as a true Master, correspondingly true service.

To Treatise III. § 4. The Ultimate End and the Subordinate End.

1. Hence, it was well said by the ancients that God is nature's paramour, that is, that God is what all things love with natural and preordained necessity (whether things for their part will it or not).^{*} For all action is of such a nature that it tends of itself under an irresistible impulse to give Him satisfaction.

To Treatise IV. § 2. Action from Passion.

1. For example, knowing vaguely, and seeing as if through a cloud, that man should abandon himself, they pass from this vague dictum to the equally vague, but quite illogical conclusion (for the former dictum is still true even though it is vague) with which they persuade themselves that man must torture himself and practice austerities. This is the source of the almost universal error of the religions of barbarians concerning themselves and their bodies, which Charron also observes in his *Sagesse*. Read there how at the tomb of Mohammed Moslems will pluck out their eyes and in other ways piteously mutilate and maim themselves; read also of countless such acts that are not dictated by Reason.[†]

To Treatise IV. § 3. Action contrary to Passion.

1. Note that the Aristotelians do not appear in this company, as in *Ethics* they scarcely deserve the name of Philosophers, but are merely wiser than the vulgar, which is why I placed them in the fourth and highest grade of the preceding subsection, dealing with the life of the vulgar. For they belong with those who temper and

* The *locus classicus* for the idea that all things naturally strive towards God as their final cause is Aristotle, *Metaphysica* XII, 7. Aristotle's idea has a certain affinity with Plato's notion of the Idea of the Good as the 'cause of knowledge and truth', from which the objects of knowledge are said to receive 'their existence and essence'. Cf. Plato, *Politeia* VI, quotations from 508 e and 509 b. Both ideas were profoundly influential.

† Cf. Pierre Charron, *De la Sagesse*, Paris: David Douceur, 1604/ed. Barbara de Negroni, Paris: Fayard, 1986, 445–448. With respect to the Moslems plucking out their eyes, Geulincx must be thinking of what Charron writes at page 448: 'Mahumetans qui se balaffrent le visage, l'estomach, les membres, pour gratifier leur Prophete.'

moderate one passion with another, and so seem to obey the Offices of Virtue, though deformed Offices, inasmuch as they obey them not at the behest of Reason but impelled by Passions and desires.

To Treatise IV. § 4. Action above Passion.

1. And when virtuous men do not pay attention to the dictate of the Passions, and what the Passions urge on them, the Passions eventually fall silent and vanish. Just as when someone talks to another, but the other does not respond, and does not want to respond, even though the other continues to question him, eventually he desists and falls silent, tired of telling a tale to the deaf; so, when the Passions are aroused by some cause other than the spirit of virtuous men, if either the cause ceases to operate (as it almost always does), or the Passions do not receive any nourishment from a mind that listens only to Reason, they will eventually desist from such poor fare. Therefore, when a human mind falls into that vortex of thoughts that arises out of sensations and passions, let it give itself over to the ineffable counsel of God that it should bear its condition calmly, show longsuffering and patience, and more and more often, and over and over again, listen to Reason with care and labour, and (as the Holy Scriptures say) *in the sweat of his brow*,* and by the use of such diverse kinds of attention attain what cannot be attained by the use of only a single act of attention. He ought also to remind himself that his attention is not to be valued by advantage or outcome but by the intention and purpose of his mind, so that if something vicious lurks in the object, and escapes notice after diligent examination has been made of it, and of such a kind as the human condition and the vortex of thoughts permit, it cannot be blamed on him. See more on this subject in my *Annotations to Descartes*, § 73, part I.†

To Treatise IV. § 5. The Enemies of Virtue.

1. Namely, they confuse that of which God the Best and Greatest is the sole author (I mean our own Passions and sensations) with that of which we are the wicked and foul authors (I mean, our depraved appetites that accompany those passions and sensations); with the inevitable result that they perceive God as the indirect

* Genesis 3: 19.

† Cf. Arnold Geulincx, *Annotata Latiora in Principia Philosophiae Renati Descartes, Opera* III, 420–426.

author of sin. So long as even the tiniest seed of this wretched persuasion infects human minds, it is impossible for them to come to any concept of true Piety: they fear God so much that they have to execrate Him whom they consider only as the author of sin and the remorseless avenger of what He has incited.

INTRODUCTION TO BECKETT'S
NOTES TO THE *ETHICS*

While Samuel Beckett has long been considered a 'philosophical' writer he never formally studied philosophy. In his biography of Beckett James Knowlson notes that Beckett saw this as a gap in his education, and indicates that he began to fill this gap soon after arriving in Paris in 1928 where he was working as a teaching assistant at the *École Normale Supérieure*. Here he made friends with Jean Beaufret, a French philosophy student. Beckett told his Irish friend and correspondent Thomas MacGreevy (whom he also met while he was at the *École Normale*) that Beaufret 'comes and talks abstractions every second day and déniche [unearths] books for me in the library'.¹ Evidence then begins to mount with regard to Beckett's interest in philosophy and his application to the private study of this field. At the same time it is clear that he is in no way apologetic for making use of philosophy in his own way: he is an artist, not a philosopher, and wishes to work with philosophy only insofar as it will add to his capacity as an artist. This is apparent in a letter to MacGreevy of 1929:

I am reading Schopenhauer. Everyone laughs at that. Beaufret and Alfý [Beckett's friend Alfred Péron] etc. But I am not reading philosophy, nor caring whether he is right or wrong or a good or worthless metaphysician. An intellectual justification of unhappiness—the greatest that has ever been attempted—is worth the examination of one who is interested in Leopardi and Proust rather than in Carducci and Barrès.²

His first published book, the poem *Whoroscope*, which won a prize offered by The Hours Press in Paris in 1930 for the best poem on the theme of time³ draws upon the life story of René Descartes. In other letters to MacGreevy Beckett mentions Schopenhauer, Berkeley, Kant, Bergson, Leibniz, Geulincx, Spinoza, and Malebranche.⁴ Clearly,

¹ James Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, London: Bloomsbury, 1996, 97.

² Letter 3. Cited in Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 118.

³ Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 111–112.

⁴ Samuel Beckett, Trinity College Dublin, MS 10402. See letters 3, 4, 8, 57, 85, 91, 103, 105, 108, 150, 155, 175.

then, with explicit mention of Descartes, Geulincx, Spinoza, Malebranche and Leibniz, Beckett had a strong interest in the philosophy of the 17th century rationalists. He is likely to have heard of Geulincx while he was first in Paris, something which Knowlson affirms.⁵

Returning to Dublin after his stint at the *École Normale* had come to an end, Beckett set about negotiating a series of cul-de-sacs. He began to teach at Trinity, only to find he could not abide the idea of pursuing a career as an academic. He fled to Paris with a burden of guilt (believing he was letting his parents down) and tried to write, but was forced to leave Paris through lack of the correct papers in 1932. He moved to London briefly before he 'crawled home' to Dublin due to lack of funds (Knowlson, 163). He remained until after his father's death in 1933, when he again tried to establish a career as a writer in London. While there, in 1935, he started work on his second novel *Murphy* (he had already finished an unpublished novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, and had published a collection of short stories, *More Pricks than Kicks*). He returned to Dublin for Christmas in late 1935 and, having fallen ill, remained again in and around his family home while finishing *Murphy*. It was at this time that Beckett sought out the work of Arnold Geulincx.

The voice urging Beckett to read Geulincx must have been insistent, as in order to get to Geulincx Beckett had to first overcome his horror of returning to Trinity College Dublin, from whence he had fled as a failed academic in 1931. He wrote to MacGreevy on January 9, 1936:

I put my foot within the abhorred gates [of TCD] for the first time since the escape, on a commission from Ruddy [Rudmose-Brown, Beckett's old French Professor at TCD and the main supporter of his academic career]. And I fear I shall have to penetrate more deeply, in search of Geulincx, who does not exist in the National, but does in TCD.⁶

A. Geulincx Antverpiensis Opera philosophica, edited by J.P.N. Land in the late 19th century was, and remains, reasonably hard to find, but having tracked down a copy at Trinity Beckett felt a need to develop his understanding of Geulincx. Evidently, whether during his first period in Paris or a little later, Beckett had read *about* Geulincx and

⁵ Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 219.

⁶ Beckett, Trinity College Dublin, MS 10402, Letter 85, 9/1/36 [written as '35' in error], Cooldrinagh.

knew the outlines of his system. On January 16, 1936, forgetting he had already informed his friend of his intention, he wrote again to MacGreevy:

I shall have to go into TCD after Geulincx, as he does not exist in National Library. I suddenly see that Murphy is [a] break down between his: *Ubi nihil vales ibi nihil velis* (position) and Malraux's *Il est difficile à celui qui vit hors du monde de ne pas rechercher les siens* (negation).⁷

While *Murphy*⁸ is the novel which is most commonly related to the ideas of Arnold Geulincx, it is interesting to note that Beckett had written all but three of the chapters of this novel by February 1936 (Knowlson, 226); that is, one month before he confirms to MacGreevy in a letter of March 6, that he had actually begun to read Geulincx. The novel was finished in the third week of June. So too, even though Spinoza is specifically alluded to in *Murphy*, at the beginning of Chapter 7, it is only after completing *Murphy* that Beckett seems to have closely studied Spinoza's *Ethics*, writing to MacGreevy on July 26 that his friend Brian Coffey had spoken 'attractively' of Spinoza, and telling MacGreevy on August 19 that while until then he had only 'tried in vain' to read Spinoza in English, Coffey had now lent him a Latin/French edition of Spinoza.⁹ He writes again on September 19 that Coffey had also lent him a copy of *Spinoza et ses contemporains* by Brunschvicg and indicates that by this time he has only read enough of the Latin/French edition 'to give me a glimpse of Spinoza as a solution and a salvation (impossible in English translations).'¹⁰

There are a number of points of interest in this for Beckett scholars. Firstly, that while Beckett had an excellent knowledge of Latin, as his notes clearly attest, he was not in the habit of reading in Latin if a book could be more readily obtained in English or French. Secondly, that the copious notes which Beckett prepared to Geulincx' *Ethics* were only made at the late stages of the composition of *Murphy*, which perhaps suggests that they were made, and, as we will see, studiously copied and corrected, for works he might write after *Murphy*.

⁷ Cited in Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 219.

⁸ Samuel Beckett, *Murphy*, New York: Grove, 1957.

⁹ Cited in Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 219.

¹⁰ Cited in Knowlson, *Damned To Fame*, 219.

That is, I would claim that these notes are not only important to the Beckett of *Murphy*, but to Beckett from this time on. Thirdly, rather than being systematic Beckett's interest in philosophers was based upon sympathy: for example, while he appears to have been drawn to Geulincx, with whose work he engages with the utmost attention, a demonstrably more influential and historically important figure such as Spinoza does not seem to engage his attention so forcefully.

By March 1936 Beckett has clearly penetrated sufficiently deeply into the Library at Trinity to have found and begun to take notes to Land's edition of Geulincx. On March 6 he writes to MacGreevy:

I have been reading Geulincx in T.C.D., without knowing why exactly. Perhaps because the text is so hard to come by. But that is a rationalisation and my instinct is right and the work worth doing, because of its saturation in the conviction that the *sub specie aeternitatis* [from the perspective of eternity] vision is the only excuse for remaining alive. He does not put out his eyes on that account, as the Israelites did and Rimbaud began to, or like the terrified Berkeley repudiate them; one feels them very patiently turned outward, and . . . inward.¹¹

The link to Geulincx (who is explicitly named by Beckett in a number of works such as, *Murphy*, 'The End',¹² and *Molloy*)¹³ has been long known, if not fully explored, in the field of Beckett studies. Hugh Kenner was among the first to mention Geulincx in 1968 in *Samuel Beckett: A critical study*, yet the importance of Geulincx was well and truly established by a letter which Beckett wrote to Sighle Kennedy in 1967 in response to her request for a key to his works (she published the study *Murphy's Bed: A Study of Real Sources and Surreal Associations in Samuel Beckett's First Novel* in 1971). This letter was first published by Lawrence Harvey, in his classic 1970 study *Samuel Beckett Poet and Critic*¹⁴ and later republished in *Disjecta*, the indispensable collection of Beckett's occasional critical writings, which was edited by Ruby Cohn in 1983. Here Beckett states:

¹¹ Beckett, Trinity College Dublin, MS 10402, Letter 91.

¹² Samuel Beckett, 'The End' in *The Complete Short Prose*, ed. S.E. Gontarski, New York: Grove, 1995.

¹³ Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*, New York: Grove, 1955.

¹⁴ See Lawrence E. Harvey, *Samuel Beckett Poet and Critic*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970, 267.

If I were in the unenviable position of having to study my work my points of departure would be the 'Naught is more real . . . ' [. . . than Nothing; Democritus] and the 'Ubi nihil vales . . . ' [. . . ibi nihil velis: Geulincx] both already in *Murphy* and neither very rational.¹⁵

'Ubi nihil vales ibi nihil velis' has often been translated by Beckett critics as: 'Where one is worth nothing one should want nothing'. The Latin, 'valeo', carries the meaning both of 'to be able to, to have force' and 'to be worth'. Beckett makes use of both senses, in what seem to be translations of this in his works. He uses the formula where one is 'worth nothing' in *Murphy*, and alternatively, where one 'can do nothing' in *The Unnamable*.¹⁶ Martin Wilson has translated Geulincx' phrase in this edition as 'wherein you have no power, therein neither should you will'.

While Beckett's interest in Geulincx has long been known, only Chris Ackerley¹⁷ and Rupert Wood¹⁸ have written in detail about him, with John Pilling¹⁹ and a few others making some interesting points in passing. This gap is hardly surprising when one considers how difficult it has been for scholars to access Geulincx' Latin works on the one hand and Beckett's Latin notes to them on the other. With the benefit of the materials brought together in this project, I have attempted to address some elements of this gap in work that I have recently published.²⁰ Here I have argued, for example, that Beckett makes use of 'images' drawn from philosophers such as Geulincx which he inserts into his works. Examples of such images

¹⁵ Samuel Beckett, *Disjecta*, ed. Ruby Cohn, London: Faber, 1983, 113.

¹⁶ Samuel Beckett, *The Unnamable*, New York: Grove, 1958, 165.

¹⁷ Chris Ackerley, *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy*, Tallahassee, Fla: Journal of Beckett Studies Books, 1998.

¹⁸ Rupert Wood, "Murphy, Beckett; Geulincx, God", *Journal of Beckett Studies* 2 (1993-2), 27-51.

¹⁹ John Pilling, *Samuel Beckett*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976.

²⁰ See Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006; Anthony Uhlmann, 'Samuel Beckett and the Occluded Image' in S.E. Gontarski and Anthony Uhlmann (eds.), *Beckett after Beckett*, Gainesville, Fla: University Press of Florida, 2006, 79-97; Anthony Uhlmann, "'A Fragment of a Vitagraph': Hiding and Revealing in Beckett, Geulincx and Descartes", in Anthony Uhlmann, Sjeff Houppermans and Bruno Clément (eds.), *After Beckett, D'après Beckett*, Samuel Beckett Today/Aujourd'hui 14, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004, 342-356.

include Geulincx' cradle: the image of the mother rocking the baby's cradle as a metaphor for God allowing us the movements we desire (in general) and (in particular) for suicide, which Beckett adapts to images of rocking chairs in *Murphy*, *Film* and *Rockaby*.²¹ Other images which might be traced to Geulincx include that of the two clocks (linking the narratives of Molloy and Moran in *Molloy*), and that of hell as involving the continuation of something not because it is logical to continue, but simply because one has started (which resonates with *The Unnamable* in particular). Perhaps most importantly, however, I argue that the 'cogito' which is described in *The Unnamable* (and which inheres in later works) is a Geulingian cogito, rather than a Cartesian cogito: that it emerges through an inspection of the self which leads to the understanding that one knows nothing (as in Geulincx) rather than to a point of foundation upon which one might build up an accurate knowledge of the world (as in Descartes). To my mind Geulincx and Beckett have in common the core affirmation that we are ultimately ignorant: while Beckett has stated that the key word to his works is 'perhaps', Bernard Rousset has claimed that 'nescio' (I do not know) is the key word to Geulincx'.²²

What I have written elsewhere, however, by no means exhausts the subject of how Beckett makes use of Geulincx. It is hoped that this publication, which offers English language students of Beckett access both to Geulincx' *Ethics* in full and to Beckett's notes to Geulincx, will open the door to further studies on the relationship between Geulincx' system and Beckett's works.

Beckett's notes to Geulincx have only recently been made available to scholars. They are now held in the Rare Books collection at Trinity College Dublin where they can be accessed via microfilm. These notes were among those that Beckett had kept with him up until his death in 1989. That is, he considered them sufficiently important that he had not, as he had with so many of his other papers, given them to Beckett archives at Reading or elsewhere. One can only assume that these were notes that he kept on hand for pos-

²¹ Samuel Beckett, *Film*, and *Rockaby* in *The Complete Dramatic Works*, London: Faber, 1986.

²² Tom F. Driver, 'Beckett by the Madeleine', Columbia University Forum, Summer 1961, 23. Bernard Rousset, *Geulincx entre Descartes et Spinoza*, Paris: Vrin, 1999.

sible future consultation (rather than seeing them as relating to a now past period of his creative life). On his death these notes passed to James Knowlson who was preparing his authorised biography, *Damned to Fame*. Soon after Knowlson published this important work, in 1996, these notes were donated by the Beckett estate to Trinity College Dublin (no doubt because they had been transcribed there in 1936).

I accessed these notes in June 2001 and March 2006. TCD Manuscript 10971/6 includes not just Beckett's notes to the *Ethics*, but further notes to works by Geulincx that are collected in Land's edition of the *Opera Philosophica*. Beckett makes a few notes (one page) to the *Questiones Quodlibeticae*. He then takes more extensive notes to the *Metaphysica Vera* (11 pages). As neither of these relate directly to the *Ethics* we have not included them here. They are in similar form to that described below: that is, Beckett has selected and directly transcribed passages which interest him from the works in question, only very rarely inserting any direct comments of his own.

The form of Beckett's notes to the *Ethics* is itself informative. There are three kinds of manuscript included in the notes to the *Ethics*. There are two typescripts, followed by a manuscript. In order to distinguish between these, I will call the first typescript the 'first fair copy' and the second the 'second fair copy' and the manuscript pages the 'manuscript'. The first fair copy comprises 24 quarto pages, the second fair copy 20 foolscap pages and the manuscript 3 foolscap pages. A number of things become apparent as one examines these documents. Firstly, it seems evident that the manuscript predates the two typed copies because it is comprised of material that does not appear in the two typed versions and follows on from the final notes offered in the second fair copy. The manuscript cuts out at *11. Adminiculum Humilitatis* (very near to the end of the First Treatise to the *Ethics*). It finishes with approximately a quarter of a page left empty, suggesting this is where Beckett genuinely stopped, rather than that there are lost pages after this. The notes, then, focus exclusively on Treatise I (but this, along with the copious Annotations to it, which Beckett also refers to at length, comprises about two thirds of the entire *Ethics*).

One might reasonably conjecture that these manuscript pages are the remnants of the original manuscript that Beckett prepared while consulting Geulincx in the reading room at Trinity College Dublin in March 1936. The first fair copy and the second fair copy were

clearly made later, though it would be difficult to determine the exact dates at which each of these copies were made. One might note, however, that the paper used differs with a larger (foolscap) page for the second fair copy and a smaller (quarto) for the first fair copy. There is also some evidence that a different typewriter was used in preparing the second fair copy: the letter capital 'D' which occurs in words such as 'Deum', is at times barely visible in the second fair copy, because it has not been properly registered on the page (being lifted upward from the standard line). There is a good deal of internal evidence that the first predates the second. The first fair copy, for example, includes a number of corrections, which have been hand written. In the second fair copy, these corrections remain, but are now typed. In addition, the second fair copy revises and clarifies some of the apparatus Beckett developed to organise his notes. In the first fair copy, Beckett indicates which paragraph a quotation is taken from by inserting (in the margin) capital letters. 'A' indicates the quoted passage comes from Geulincx' paragraph '1', 'B' from Geulincx' paragraph '2' and so on (it is not clear why Beckett made this change from Geulincx' numerical system to his own alphabetical one). In the first fair copy Beckett also indicates that a passage has been taken from the Annotations (and not the main text) by including the capital letter 'A' in brackets after the passage in question. Beckett perhaps found this double use of the capital 'A' lacked clarity, and so in the second fair copy he indicates the passage has been taken from the Annotations by using the lower case 'a'. The most significant change in the second fair copy involves Beckett's decision to change the order in which the 'Argument' to a given heading occurs. In Geulincx, and in Beckett's first fair copy, the Argument to a given heading (which summarizes what is discussed under that heading) is given at the end of the Annotations to that Number. In the second fair copy Beckett moves all of these Arguments to the top of each section, under the relevant headings. This, no doubt, allowed for easier reference.

The second fair copy also includes more material than the first fair copy. That is, it repeats all that appears in the first fair copy before continuing on from the first fair copy. It is possible that pages from the first fair copy have been lost, but it is not possible to determine this definitively. Given that the second fair copy is the most comprehensive version, I have followed this throughout in transcribing Beckett's notes below (with the Latin of course, having been replaced

by Martin Wilson's English translations). Except when noted, all of the text in these notes amount to direct quotations from Geulincx.

Much more could be said about the content of the notes themselves. I have offered my own readings of some aspects of the images which occur in both Beckett and Geulincx elsewhere, and will not venture any further here. One can not fail to be impressed with the thoroughness of these notes: while Beckett 'merely' copies passages, they are carefully selected, and at times Beckett alters the order in which Annotations occur to clarify ideas which are of importance to him. Along with my colleagues Martin Wilson and Han van Ruler, I wish future scholars well as they crawl over the intricate surface of these notes in making sense of them and their connection to Beckett's works.

AU

SAMUEL BECKETT'S NOTES TO HIS READING
OF THE *ETHICS* BY ARNOLD GEULINCX

THE ETHICS

Dedication:¹ To The Curators Of The University Of Leiden. In the Temple of Wisdom Ethics is the ceiling and the roof . . . , without Ethics it will be not a Temple but an open pool . . . The roof of the Temple of Philosophy being Ethics, that Treatise which deals most closely with Virtue itself is the apex and Cornice of that roof.

Preface: To the Reader

For the *Cardinal Virtues* as reckoned by me are not those reckoned by the vulgar. According to the vulgar, they are *Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance*; but for me they are *Diligence* (listening to Reason), Obedience (following Reason), Justice (proportion to Reason), and Humility (not having a care of oneself) . . . There can be no true exercise of Virtue without the four virtues that I have taken as *Cardinal*. In order for any action to be right, one must listen to Reason (this is Diligence), do what Reason says (this is Obedience), do neither more nor less than that (this is Justice), and not do it for one's own sake (this is Humility).

I intermix with them nothing from sacred sources; everything comes from Reason, whatever rivulet of it is present.

Humility foreign to the ancients . . .² But self-love seduced them all; and here I excuse no-one, not even great Plato. . . . With might and main they strove one and all for the *Blessed Life* . . . Christians alone here are wise in some respects by virtue of their Religion . . . No-one else, as far as I know, has acted the Philosopher here and hit the nail on the head of Natural Reason pure and simple (for this, to me, is to philosophise).

¹ Words marked in bold indicate that text has been added by Samuel Beckett. The added text is in Latin in the original unless otherwise noted.

² This note is in English in the original. In the First Fair Copy this is written as '*Humility no virtue for the ancients*'.

The Word of God is my Dutch Tube . . .

Lastly, Reader, be a constant reader here. And what you read in my Book, re-read in your mind. Make no mistake: it is written there also.

Treatise I
On Virtue

And its prime attributes, which are commonly called cardinal virtues

Chapter I

On Virtue in General

Ethics is concerned with Virtue. Virtue is the exclusive Love of right Reason.

1. *Love*

The Argument

Love has two divisions: pleasant love, and effective love.

Pleasant love also has two divisions: sensible or corporeal love (which is passionate love, or affective love), and spiritual love (which is a certain kind of approbation; and pre-eminent here is that approbation with which we approve of our actions when they conform with Reason, that is, the highest law).

Neither kind of love (that is, neither pleasant love nor effective love) constitutes Virtue.

Effective love is a firm intention, signifying an end-for-which. It is often generated by affective love (which happens in vice, and in particular in intemperance). Sometimes it generates affective love (which is often the case in the exercise of virtue), sometimes the latter is without the former, and sometimes the former is without the latter.

Effective love is either benevolent love (which does not make for virtue, as we cannot do anything either good or bad for Reason), concupiscent love (and this makes for virtue even less, as with concupiscent love we love ourselves, not Reason), or obedient love (and this at last constitutes virtue, for no other love is consistent with Reason). (a) [From Annotations: Argument To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love.]

A [←in margin] this *passion*, which is widely called *Love*, is the entire, exclusive, and sole delight of the human mind, insofar as it is human and joined to a body. For even though the human mind, insofar as it is a mind, is capable of more elevated pleasures (such as the mere approbation of its own actions, when they accord with Divine Law), nevertheless, insofar as it is joined to a body, and born to act on it, and in turn to receive something from it, and as it were be acted upon by it, it knows no other tenderness than *passion*. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 1.]

What love is, does not need to be stated . . . There is often a certain ambiguity in a name when the thing itself is perfectly clear. this Ambiguity surrounding the word *Love* is a source of major errors in Ethics. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 1.]

B [←in margin] The whole meaning and nature of Virtue can be compressed into these few words: *Virtue is the intention of doing what Reason dictates*. Whether this intention is joined with, or lacks tenderness (passionate love), is of no consequence for the nature of Virtue. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 7.]

Effective Love (**Reason**) and *Affective Love* (**Passion**) . . . And Effective Love includes not only a firm intention of doing what Reason determines ought to be done; but in general every firm intention to act. Even a firm intention of pursuing and avenging your injuries is also Love; not, to be sure, towards him on whom you have determined to avenge yourself and punish, but towards yourself, whom you wish by means of that revenge to pacify, placate, restore, and delight. Hence, Affective Love is any tenderness whatever in the human mind; but Effective Love is a firm intention to act. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 2.]

C [←in margin] (**In some**)³ Affective Love is barren, and does not generate Effective Love. Such men should not be held in high regard, for though they have within themselves the seed of true love, it does not germinate. Affective Love is like a seed that has only this one use, that is, to beget Effective Love. Otherwise it is in itself quite useless. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 10]

³ English in the original. In the First Fair Copy this is written as: 'in some men'.

D [←in margin] *Desire* is nothing other than *love of something absent*; and it therefore contains in itself both tenderness (*love*), and affliction or bitterness (the anguish caused by the absence of the thing loved). *Hope* is nothing other than *love directed towards a future good of which we can be frustrated*; and again therefore it contains tenderness (that is, passionate love) and bitterness (that is, *fear* of being frustrated of that good). And *trust* is nothing other than *great hope*, that is, *great love combined with a little fear*. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 3.]

E [←in margin] These two kinds of Love (Affective and Effective) are very often found together; with Affective Love sometimes generating Effective Love, sometimes the reverse. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 5.]

Men are wont to give precedence to their passions over their actions, and speak and act as they are so moved. This indeed is quite perverse (in fact, in the propensity of mind . . . to accommodate action to our affections lies the whole origin of sin, as is shown below, in Treatise IV). (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 15.]

It is clear that they refer all things to themselves insofar as they are men, that is, when they are joined to a body. If they would consider themselves abstracted from the body and the human condition, the pleasure that consists in the bare approbation of their own actions would seem to them to be sufficient. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 4.]

We [sometimes] feel pleasure without any underlying cause of pleasure. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 5.]

F [←in margin] There are also two kinds of Effective Love, namely, *Benevolent* Love and *Concupiscent* Love . . . Reason is an image of the divine that we have within ourselves, and consequently, inasmuch as it is a divine image (and to that extent loveable), it can no more receive good or ill from us than God Himself . . . We commend a mirror that reflects true images of things, and discommend one that reflects false and distorted images; but no-one believes the things reflected in the mirror to be either commendable or discommendable on that account. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 6.]

Our actions are as it were a mirror of Reason and God's law.
(A) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 20.]

Passionate love, that is, affective love, is beyond the scope of morality. It is neither good nor bad within the criteria of morality . . . just as seeing, hearing, and similar things, are natural, not moral . . . (a)
[From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 6.]

G [←in margin] Concupiscent Love . . . it is nothing other than Self-Love or Philautia . . . it is the tinder of Sin, or rather Sin its very own self. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 7.]

The root of Ethics is humility, to withdraw from oneself, to be subject to no care or regard of oneself; but the end and fruit of Ethics is the law and Obligation by which we are in some way held fast to Reason and God. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 23.]

That sorry little word that with them is frequently on their lips and ever in their minds: *Mine*. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 7.]

H [←in margin] These . . . three kinds of Love . . . (that is, Affective Love, and the two kinds of Effective Love . . .) . . . are outside the scope of Virtue . . . There remains yet a fourth kind of Love . . . which in fact is another kind of Effective Love that can be called *Obedient Love*. This is nothing other than a firm intention of obeying the orders of another. And with this Love we finally arrive at the nature of Virtue. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 8.]

For when we love Reason with obedient love, it is impossible for us to love ourselves with concupiscent love, since it is the highest law of Virtue . . . not to love oneself. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Ann. 25.]

For the way in which we ought to love Reason (the love of which constitutes Virtue) is to have a firm intention of doing whatever Reason dictates. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 1. Love. Paragraph 8.]

2. Reason

The Argument

What Reason is, is sufficiently known because of the fact that it is known at some point.

Virtue is rather love of Reason than love of God; for our love—and I mean obedient love, of which alone we here speak—is superfluous when addressed to God Himself, who must be obeyed whether we will or not.

Redundant to the definition of Virtue are these two qualifications placed in front, . . . *Exclusive* and *Right* . . . For these qualifications are already there by nature: love of Reason cannot be other than exclusive . . . (et) right Reason and Reason are the same thing. (a) [From Annotations: Argument To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason.]

A [←in margin] What Reason *is* . . . is sufficiently well known to all of us, as we have the distinction of being rational. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Paragraph 1.]

It is clear to all men that the summation of Ethics is contained in this saying: *wherein you have no power, therein you should not will*,⁴ or in other words, *do nothing in vain* . . . the supreme principle of Ethics, from which you can easily deduce every single one of the obligations that make up the scope of Ethics . . . For if we should do nothing *in vain*, then we should not resist when God summons us, and releases us from the human condition, that is, announces our death; and this is the *first obligation*. If we should do nothing *in vain*, then we should not resist when God commands us to go on living, and continues to subject us to the human condition; and this is the *second obligation*. And if the latter is the case, then we must earn a living; and this is the *third obligation*. And if this is the case, then we must perform some function, and so on . . . (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 3.]

B [←in margin] Virtue is the Love of Reason, and not strictly speaking, or at least not so precisely speaking, the Love of God as He is in Himself. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Paragraph 2.]

To have to endure something we dislike is the epitome of unhappiness; and we are all distressed when something happens, or simply is the case, in some other way than we wish . . . [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Paragraph 2.]

⁴ *ubi nihil valet, ibi nihil velis*: Beckett makes use of this formulation from Geulincx on a number of occasions. See Uhlmann's introduction for further details.

An Intention of obeying God as He is in Himself . . . is as pointless as intending to arrange for a hill to have a vale . . . To wish to obey the absolute, true, and strict will of God in some matter, is to wish what has already been done. . . . [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Paragraph 2.]

Those who do something already done are said to act in vain . . . and *when the end is done with, the means are done with too* . . . to want to obey God absolutely is . . . to want to do what is already done. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 7.]

He is still not the author of sin, but the author of nature. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 8.]

The *power* of God has to be reconciled with His *goodness*. The *power*, by which He does all things, that is, all genuine things, in such a way that nothing untoward occurs, still less anything against His will; and the *goodness*, by which he does not desire sin, but rightly condemns it in us, and punishes it . . . This craving of human ingenuity to reconcile things that exceed its understanding involves no small measure of impiety . . . once we have rid ourselves of this craving for reconciliations, it should be enough for us to distinguish each term of the reconciliation clearly and distinctly . . . understanding quite clearly that nothing happens unless God directly wills it to happen (which is one term), and that, on the other hand, He blames us for our sins, and punishes them severely (which is the other term). (A) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 8.]

Just as a ship carrying a passenger with all speed towards the west in no way prevents the passenger from walking towards the east, so the will of God, carrying all things, impelling all things with inexorable force, in no way prevents us from resisting his will (as much as is in our power) with complete freedom. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 9.]

C [←in margin] Moral and Ethical matters presuppose natural and Physical matters . . . It follows from this that Ethics, more than any other science, is exceedingly liable to errors; for it has not only *its own* sewers, through which errors flow up into it . . . but also *alien* ones. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 11.]

Since love of God precludes self-love, it also precludes any other love. (a) [From Annotations To Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Ann. 12.]

*Beyond God and Reason, all things must be despised.*⁵ [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 2. Reason. Paragraph 4.]

3. *Disposition*

Def. By Cicero as:⁶ “constant and absolute completeness of mind or body, in some particular point—as for instance, his perception of virtue, or of some art, or else some science or other. And we include also some personal advantages not given to him by nature, but procured by study and industry.”⁷

The Argument

Virtue must not be placed in disposition. First, because while virtue is prior to virtuous actions, disposition is posterior to them; secondly, because while virtue belongs with morals, disposition belongs with nature. . . . Thirdly, because while virtue can be acquired all at once, disposition can be acquired only gradually and through repeated acts. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition.]

A [←in margin] Aristotelians and Scholastics would have Virtue to be a *disposition to act rightly, acquired by the frequent performance of good actions*. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Paragraph 1.]

Disposition, or disposability, has two senses, custom and facility; the latter as effect, the former as cause; so that disposition is nothing other than facility engendered by custom. Custom alone is not disposition . . . A projectile fired high into the air does not acquire a disposition to ascend . . . For its part, facility does not suffice on its own for disposition. A sphere rotates and rolls about on a plane in a facile manner, but no disposition is observable in the sphere. (a)

⁵ This line only appears in the First Fair Copy.

⁶ English in the original.

⁷ “animi aut corporis constantem et absolutam aliqua in re perfectionem, ut virtutis aut artis alicuius perceptionem aut quamvis scientiam et item corporis aliquam commoditatem non natura datam, sed studio et industria partam.” Cf. *De Intentione*, Liber 1.36. The English translation cited here is from Cicero, *Treatise on Rhetorical Invention*, Book 1, Chapter XXV. Translated by C.D. Yonge, in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, Volume 4, London: George Bell & Sons, 1888, 241–380, <http://classic-persuasion.org/pw/cicero/dnindex.htm>.

[From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Ann. 1.]

It is obvious that neither of them is a constituent of the nature of Virtue; for to do something *easily* [Beckett's emphasis] is not necessarily to do good, nor is *to be accustomed* to do something necessarily to do good . . . And what further proof do we need that the nature of Virtue is not derived from disposition? (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Ann. 2.]

Whatever happens other than out of a right end is, by the fact that the end is not right, a sin. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Ann. 3.]

B [←in margin] A good man, when he sleeps or drowns, is still called good, because when he eventually does something he will resume that intention which is the sole reason why he is accounted good. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Paragraph 2.]

A custom of doing good . . . a condition of being popularly known as virtuous; . . . is not the formal cause of that denomination . . . There is a wide difference between a formal cause and a precondition of denomination . . . When I am in Leiden, it is a precondition . . . of my being in The Hague that I depart from Leiden, but it is not the formal cause. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Ann. 6.]

C [←in margin] Familiarity, or love of the commonplace, and fear of what is not commonplace, are passions by which the greater part of the vulgar are continually moved. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Ann. 9.]

D [←in margin] [There is] here a wide distinction between Habit and Love . . . Habit has a thick hide, it does not feel discomfort; Love is tender, and feels discomforts acutely even as it tramples on them, thrusts them aside, and wins the victory over them. Thus, Disposition may be a happier state of mind, but Love is far more generous. [From Treatise I. Chapter I. § 3. Disposition. Paragraph 4.]

CHAPTER II
On the Cardinal virtues

The Cardinal Virtues are the attributes of Virtue that proceed from it most closely and immediately, without reference to any particular external circumstances. . . . *Diligence, Obedience, Justice, and Humility.*

SECTION I

1. *Diligence*

The Argument

Diligence is listening to Reason.

It has two parts: Turning away from external things (for they hinder listening), and turning into oneself (for Reason, which we have to listen to, has its dwelling-place there).

The Adminicle of diligence is familiarity with Reason.

The Fruit of diligence is prudence.

Moreover, speculative wisdom, which has a great affinity with prudence, is born directly after prudence. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence.]

A [←in margin] Reason has these four attributes. First, there is *dictate*; secondly, *law*; thirdly, *rule*; and fourthly, the *task*. . . Accordingly, Virtue, which is nothing other than love of Reason, embraces Reason as pronouncing its dictate, through listening, or *diligence*. . . Reason as promulgating *law* through *obedience*. . . Reason as *ruling* and measuring our actions through *justice*; and finally, . . . Reason as enjoining on us our task and office through *humility*. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 3.]

Which is an intense and continuous withdrawal of the mind (no matter what its current business) from external things into itself, into its own innermost sanctum, in order to consult the sacred Oracle of Reason. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Paragraph 1.]

B [←in margin] [No text beside this. Only in First Fair Copy.]

C [←in margin] These are the shining words of Diligence: *Learn not many things, but much about a few things.* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 9.]

There is nothing that veils Reason from us other than our prejudices and desires. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 10.]

Metaphysics and Logic, which abound everywhere in superfluities, while being still by nature true and genuine sciences no less than Mathematics. . . . (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 11.]

Therefore, Reason is rightly depicted as a fair maiden who disdains to share the marriage-bed of wisdom with one by whom she sees her rudiments held in contempt. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 12.]

D [←in margin] The Fruit of Diligence is Wisdom. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Paragraph 4.]

Wisdom [*sapientia*] is so-called from 'to taste' [*sapere*], which is when we examine with our sense of taste something corporeal. The scope of the other senses reaches only to the exterior of things, and grasps only the surface of the things towards which it is directed, but taste invades and penetrates the interior parts of the body whose interior is subjected to it . . . It is the same with Wisdom, which is born of profound attention to Reason, invades and penetrates the object, and judges it far otherwise than the common sense of men or the "received intelligence" of the Scholastics. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 15.]

Diligence is a perpetual grasping at Reason, wisdom the capture of it: the diligent man grasps at Reason, the wise man captures it. But by grasping at it we at length capture it, that is, diligence at length leads to wisdom. But, . . . capture sometimes eludes him who grasps at it; and . . . that diligence is sometimes frustrated of wisdom. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 16.]

In Ethics . . . Wisdom changes its name, and is called *Prudence*, since it is prudent to be wise in everything that makes for Virtue; while in Physics . . . Wisdom simply retains the name of *Wisdom*. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Paragraph 4.]

E [←in margin] Philaretus (**Geulincx's fictitious apostrophe, virtuous but hasty**). (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 18.]

Anyone who grasps at something in this way never grasps it; anyone who, led on by passion, seeks Reason never finds it, for he is always being led away from Reason by passion. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 1. Diligence. Ann. 23.]

2. *Obedience*

The Argument

Obedience is an exercise of Reason.

The Adminicle of Obedience is, with the utmost diligence to beware of the Obedience of men. We must no doubt on occasion do what men order, but never because they order it. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience.]

A [←in margin] [Only in First Fair Copy.]

B [←in margin] Obedience has two parts: To Do (what Reason dictates) and Not To Do (what Reason forbids) [Beckett slightly changes the word order here]. In Physics there is but one simple precept: *to demonstrate*. In Morals there are two: *to prescribe*, and *to forbid*. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 2.]

C [←in margin] This will be the Adminicle of Obedience, that we gradually lead our minds away from doing things which we know consist merely of human conventions, customs, and habits; or rather that we be studiously aware when we do them . . . that we do them not because they are prescribed by custom or habit, or established by the consensus and authority of men, but only because God commands, and Reason requires them. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 3.]

The⁸ end-for-which of obedience (**God**) and the *possibly*⁹ subordinate end-for-which (**the master**). (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 7.]

⁸ English in the original.

⁹ English in the original.

D [←in margin] The Fruit of Obedience is Freedom. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 4.]

Essential freedom is: *do what thou wilt*. . . . Accidental *do what thou hast determined upon* . . . another, and third kind of freedom . . . that is, *do as thou plearest*; or . . . *do as thou art minded* . . . In this sense of freedom the virtuous man is always and everywhere absolutely free, and he alone. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 14.]

He who serves Reason is a slave to no-one, but rather is on that account completely free. He does what he wants, what he does not want he does not do, and he does or does not do just so much as he has decided to do, neither more nor less . . . [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 4.]

Virtuous men can never be frustrated (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 15.]

Not, however, because his master commands them, but because he himself wants to do them . . . [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 4.]

To serve someone is nothing other than to do something *because* he commands it . . . [it] is not to do *what* he commands . . . the virtuous man very often does *what* some man commands, but never does it *because* the man commands it; therefore, he serves no man, but only Reason and God . . . (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 16.]

It is plain that the virtuous man can never be free in the sense of not serving anyone; for he serves God and Reason, and his entire freedom consists in that service . . . The virtuous man does what he wishes only in the sense that he wishes nothing but what Reason dictates, against which¹⁰ he does not do anything without willing it. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 17.]

Every analogy is lame. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Ann. 18.]

Mors ultima linea rerum est [Death is the ultimate boundary of things]. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 2. Obedience. Paragraph 4.]

¹⁰ At this point the pages in the Second Fair Copy in the TCD manuscript are out of order. I have reestablished the correct order here.

3. *Justice**The Argument*

Justice is the fair application of Reason.

There are two parts to this fairness: To cut away what is superfluous to the proportion (purity) and to supply what is required to make up the proportion (perfection) . . . Justice protects us against two vices, excess and defect; purity, or its right hand, which bears a sword, keeps at bay and guards against the former; perfection, or its left hand, which is equipped with a scale, the latter.

The Adminicle of Justice is serious consideration of the essence of things, and consists in number and proportion . . . Actions will not be virtuous . . . if there is anything in them, however small, that is more or less than Reason would dictate.

The essential Fruit of Justice is that sufficiency which arises from the avoidance of both the superfluous and the deficient; the accidental Fruit, on the other hand, is the sufficiency which consists in the passion commonly known as *contentment*. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice.]

A [←in margin] The cutting off of what is excessive [making up for] what is deficient in the actions that Obedience proposes. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 1.]

Thus do those sweet Goddesses (**virtues**) delight in making sport of us. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 1.]

They are Goddesses, because they join and link us so closely with God. Hence comes all our blessedness and happiness, hence we ourselves become as it were lesser gods, if we let ourselves be joined with God by their ministry . . . *There is nothing more beautiful than the righteousness of God.* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Ann. 5]

B [←in margin] *Vice of Excess, Vice of Defect.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 2.]

Things do not depend on names, and if there are not names for newly-discovered things, let some be devised. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Ann. 9.]

RELIGION	SUPERSTITION		MANY PIETY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	IMPIETY		

GOOD HUMOUR	BUFFOONERY		GRAVITY
	Excess	Defect	
	Defect	Excess	
	CLODDISHNESS		

“—It has been right, and always will
 To give a name to what has none” (a) [From Annotations to Treatise
 I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Ann. 9.]

There is always more danger from excess than from defect. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Ann. 10.]

C [←in margin] The vulgar scatter names about lavishly, and extend them to things that do not bear such a meaning. What is *almost*, they say *is*: what is *only just*, they say *is not*. These verbal abuses would be tolerable if they did not impose them on the things themselves, and fall into the habit of judging the things themselves by their names. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 3.]

Anyone who deviates from what Reason says by the smallest amount does not do what Reason says, but does something else, and is an enemy of God and Reason, a sinner. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 3.]

D [←in margin] Sufficiency [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 4.]: when we take away what was too much, and make up what was too little and incomplete, it results necessarily in that state of sufficiency than which nothing more sublime, nothing more heavenly, can be conceived; for things are never better than when they are just enough. Beyond this essential sufficiency of justice we find an accidental kind of sufficiency, which is commonly called in the vernacular ‘contentment’: it is a passion that belongs to affective love, and is by far the most pleasant kind of passion. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Ann. 14.]

Therefore, only a Just Man can give sufficiency; others do either too little or too much. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 4.]

Excess contains something beyond moderation, that is, beyond the *sufficient*; and this cannot be anything but *useless*, as what is beyond the *sufficient* is necessarily *useless* (since the *sufficient* would be enough). [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section I. § 3. Justice. Paragraph 4.]

SECTION II

As Humility is a large subject, I thought it best to divide this Chapter into two Sections. Humility is the most exalted of the Cardinal Virtues: when Virtue includes only Diligence, Obedience, and Justice, it is incomplete. Humility closes the circle: beyond it nothing more can be added to Virtue.

1. *Humility*

The Argument

Humility is carelessness of oneself; not in a positive sense, but (as I employ the words) in a negative sense. Hence, humility is better described as carelessness and neglect of oneself than as disregard of oneself.

Humility is born out of Virtue; for it is impossible that anyone should neglect himself unless led to such neglect by love of Reason, that is, divine law. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 1. Humility.]

A [←in margin] Humility is Disregard of oneself out of a Love of God and Reason.

Humility therefore calls for *negative* disregard of oneself.

Not that a virtuous man ought not to be able to provide for his bodily needs or mental pleasures, but that he should do so not for his own sake, and in consideration of himself, but for the sake of Reason alone, which sometimes bids him refresh his body and recreate his mind. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 1. Humility. Paragraph 1.]

Reason dictates that we remain among the living until we are released (for having been sent here by God, we have by this very fact been ordered to remain here until something else is imposed on us); if we must remain here, we must eat; if we must eat, we must also work; if we must work, we must keep our body fit for work; for this we must give our body [. . .] pleasure [Beckett leaves a few words out here]. The virtuous man is always ascending and descending this ladder: he seeks ease that he may be fit for work; he wants to be fit for work that he may work; he wants to work that he may have something to eat; he wants to eat that he may live; he wants to live because God has ordered it, not because it pleases him, and not because life (as it has become popular to say) is so sweet. [. . .] From all this it is very clear that though he will on occasion pursue ease and pleasure, he never pursues them for himself, or for the sake of having them, but because God on occasion obliges him to pursue them; and thus [. . .] this fair chain is perpetually held together by its admirable links. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 1. Humility. Ann 4.]

B [←in margin] The Love of God and Reason (which is the definition of Virtue) has this effect on one who loves them, that he forsakes himself, withdraws from himself, and takes no account of himself. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 1. Humility. Paragraph 2.]

2. *Inspection of Oneself*

The Argument

It is as if the human condition has four parts: firstly, the action with which we move our body, and with our body as an intermediary, other bodies; secondly, the passion with which we receive an image of parts of the world when we apply our sight, our hearing, and our other senses to them; as the third part, there is our birth, or our first coming into this state and condition; the fourth part being death, or our departure from this condition.

And we learn by inspecting ourselves that we can do nothing about any part of the human condition, we have no power, and no rights over it; that it is all down to someone else's power.

For as regards the first part: we have no power to affect either our own or any other body; this is perfectly obvious from our consciousness alone, and no sane man would deny it. **(B & C)**

Nor do we move even our own body; we do not know how to move it, and if we did know, that knowledge would contribute nothing towards moving it. **(D)**

Much less do we move other bodies. **(E)**

From this it follows that we can do nothing outside ourselves; for if we did anything outside ourselves, it would have to happen through motion. **(F)**

However, motion often follows, or is connected with, the command of our will; but with someone else taking charge of that connection, and also determining it. **(G)**

As regards the second part: things placed outside us cannot impress their likeness on me; nor can I myself capture that likeness of my own accord; for such things impinge upon or affect at most my body, and this is as much to say that it does nothing of itself towards perceiving them. **(H, I)**

Hence also, there must be someone else who can by His own power impress on me the likeness of the world; just as He impresses my action on small parts of the world; and in each case in an ineffable manner, which perpetually eludes me when I try to grasp it. **(J, K)**

As regards the third part: so far from coming here willingly, so far from coming here under my own power, I do not even know *how* I came here. **(L)**

As regards the fourth part: likewise unwillingly, but also reluctantly; in this I recognise my own wickedness and folly, departing reluctantly because I must depart, and desiring to have power over something where I know I have no power. **(M)**

I set forth a brief capitulation of all this, digested into twelve articles. **(N)** [This cites in full the Argument, substituting Beckett's alphabetical reference system for Geulincx's numerical reference system. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself.]

A [←in margin] Humility has two parts: Inspection of Oneself, and Disregard of Oneself. As to the former, it is nothing other than that celebrated saying of the Ancients, KNOW THYSELF. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 1.]

B [←in margin] *Inspection of Oneself* consists in a careful enquiry into the nature, condition, and origin of oneself. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 2.]

In this inspection the first thing we have to do is to dismiss everything that is not ours . . . Having dismissed those things from our attention, we shall as a result at last come to see that nothing is ours beyond *to be conscious* and *to will*. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 1.]

We see then that the world as it affects our senses can be conveniently divided into regions, and the inhabitants of those regions. The first region is that vast *sky* . . . and the inhabitants of this region are the stars . . . The second region is the air [. . .] its inhabitants are clouds, and the phenomena they produce . . . The third region is the sea, whose inhabitants are fish . . . The fourth region is the land, of which there are two sub-regions: the upper, whose inhabitants are plants and animals . . . and the lower sub-region, whose inhabitants are metals, stones, and every kind of mineral. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 2.]

When I see all these things, I say that I am seeing the World, or some part of the World. But even as I see them, I am well aware that I did not make any of them, that I cannot make any of them, and that I have simply found them here all about me. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 2.]

We all acknowledge with one voice: we did not make these things, we came upon them all here, and we shall in due course leave them behind here. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 4.]

C [←in margin] Finally, there is also a certain body which is more joined to me, in such a way that through its intervention I perceive all the other bodies . . . and without whose intervention I would be incapable of perceiving them . . . Because this body is joined to me in such a way, I am accustomed to call it *my* body . . . [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 3.]

Thus, my body is defined as the occasion of my perceiving other bodies in the world, without whose intervention I would not perceive any other bodies . . . *My body* is a part of the world, an inhabitant of the fourth region, and claims a place among the species who

walk over it, *I*, as one who escapes all the senses, and who himself can neither be seen, heard, nor touched, am by no means a part of the world. These senses all have their seat in my body, and nothing can pass from them into me. I elude every appearance: I am without colour, shape, or size, I have neither length nor breadth, for all these qualities belong to my body. I am defined by consciousness and will alone. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 5.]

D [←in margin] I do not make that motion (**of the body**). I do not know how such a thing is brought about, and it would be impudent of me to say that I do what I do not know how to do. (a) [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 4.]

We liberally (and I do not know with what kind of innate arrogance) mingle ourselves with the works of God. For since He makes the world through motion . . . we too want to do so when we maintain that we are able to move this little body of ours. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 8.]

It is perfectly evident, and nothing can be thought more clearly than that what I do not know how to do is not my action. (. . . I have not claimed that *what you do not know how to do does not happen*, but: *what you do not know how to do is not your action*. [From Geulincx's footnote to Annotation 9]) Nor is there any need for arguments here, only anyone's consciousness . . . I say . . . that if you are willing to describe yourself as the doer of anything that you do not know how to do, there is no reason why you should not believe that you have done or do anything that happens or has been done. If you do not know how motion is made in the organs of your body while being nevertheless quite sure that you made it, you could say with equal justification that you are the author of Homer's *Iliad*, or that you built the walls of Nineveh, or the Pyramids; you could say with equal justification that you make the Sun rise and set for us all, and the succession of days and nights, and of winter and summer. Why are these not your actions, why are you conscious that they are not your actions, if not because you do not know how to do them? This is the first thing we usually say when we want to convince others most forcefully that we have not done something: *I do not understand how*

it is done, I do not know how to do it. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 9.]

With the aid of Physics and Anatomy I may be able to trace this motion for some distance, but I still feel sure that in moving my organs I am not directed by that knowledge; and that on occasion I have moved them just as promptly, or perhaps even more promptly, when nothing could have been further from my mind. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 4.]

The first rule of Reason that denies motion to us is: *Do not say that you do what you do not know how to do.* The second rule is: *Know that you have no right over what is determined by the will of another.* Accordingly, motion is often absent when we will it (as in paralysis), and often present when we do not will it (as in epileptic fits). Motion therefore persists and decays by the action of an author other than myself. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 14.]

E [←in margin] If I do not make motion in my body, how much less do I make motion outside my body. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 5.]

F [←in margin] Finally, it is clear . . . that I do nothing outside myself; that whatever I do stays within me; and that nothing I do passes into my body, or any other body, or anything else. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 6.]

G [←in margin] Therefore, when my actions are diffused outside me, it is because someone else animates them, imparting the force and weight by which alone they are achieved, and which they could not have received from me. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 7.]

Strictly speaking, my action does not flow outside me; the whole of it always stays and stops with me; but because with my action, for example, willing to speak or wrestle, God in an ineffable manner conjoins certain motions, whether of tongue, or hands and feet, within this little body of mine, the action of my will, when these motions follow or accompany it, seems in a certain tropical or figurative way of speaking to extend outside me, and to be diffused

into my body and its organs, the tongue, hands, and feet. However, the action itself is not really diffused; for the action that is received into my body is not mine but the mover's . . . *Owing to Divine power, my actions are sometimes diffused outside me; but to that extent they are not my actions but God's.* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 17.]

This same one has set limits beyond which he refuses to carry my actions. At the command of my will (here the action is within me) my hands may move in a corresponding way (and here the action is outside me, and now translated into my body, not indeed by me but by him who can do this) so as to grasp and pick up certain stones and pile them up into what I am pleased to call a house or tower (which I also claim that I build); yet the stars will not rise or set at the command of my will, clouds will not gather to water my crops, or pass over when I stand in need of sunshine, nor will the sea ebb and flow otherwise than is its custom. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 7.]

Just as the whole of motion is denied to us as authors, so only a tiny amount is allowed to us as users. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 18.]

These feet are not moved because I wish to go on my way, but because another wishes what I wish. It is just like a baby laid in his cradle: if he wishes the cradle to rock it sometimes rocks, though not because he wishes it, but because his mother or nurse, sitting beside it, wills it, and because she . . . can fulfil it and also wishes to fulfil what he wishes . . . Furthermore, my will does not move the Mover to move my limbs; rather, He who imparts motion to matter and has given laws to it is the same one who has formed my will, and yoked together these diverse things (the motion of matter and the decision of my will) in such a way that when my will wishes, such motion as it wishes appears; and on the other hand when motion appears my will wishes it, without either causing or influencing the other. It is the same as if two clocks agree precisely with each other and with the daily course of the Sun: when one chimes and tells the hours, the other also chimes and likewise indicates the hour; and all that without any causality in the sense of one having a causal effect on the other, but rather on account of mere dependence, inasmuch as both of them have been constructed with the same art and similar industry. So, for example, motion of the tongue accompa-

nies our will to speak, and this will accompanies the motion, without either the latter depending on the former, or the former depending on the latter, but rather both depending on that same supreme artificer who has joined and yoked them together so ineffably. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 19.]

H [←in margin] Thus, I am a mere spectator of a machine whose workings I can neither adjust nor readjust. I neither construct nor demolish anything here: the whole thing is someone else's affair. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 8.]

I [←in margin] The most excellent fruit of the Inspection of Oneself is that one correctly distinguishes oneself from one's body: everything else follows easily from this. Moreover, confusion of the notions of mind and body is the sure and certain source of all sin, all impiety, and Atheism. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 27.]

What the eyes offer, and bring to seeing is something that they get not from their own nature, nor from me, but from somewhere else. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 9.]

J [←in margin] I understand clearly how I have come to acknowledge that my actions do not affect things in the world, and that neither do the actions of the world affect me. Here once again I get some inkling of the power and activity of another, a power and activity that cannot be stated in words. This much I understand clearly, that it is not owing to the power either of objects or my eyes that I see; this much I also understand clearly, that in consequence there exists something else (which I shall call a *Divinity*, for want of a better name) whose power grants these things to me; though how it grants them I do not understand, although I do understand that I shall never understand it. But it would be inappropriate, just because I do not know how they come about, if I were to regard the very obvious and clear results of my enquiries as tainted. It would be as if someone were to deny that a magnet attracts iron just because he does not understand why it does so. Likewise, I would

have to deny that I see, because (as I have now realised) I do not know how I see. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 10.]

Something is said to be *ineffable* not because we cannot think or speak of it (for this would be *nothing*, *nothing* and *unthinkable* being the same . . .) but because we cannot think about or encompass with our reason how it is done. And in this sense God is ineffable not only in Himself but in all His works. For example, I, as a man, am his work; I know that this work exists, in fact I know nothing so well as that this work exists; but the manner in which He made me a man and joined me to my body, so that I act on it and am acted on . . . I do not understand; I understand only that I can never understand it . . . The same is true of the rest of God's works, for when they are thoroughly investigated, in the end an ineffable something is always missing. Therefore . . . it is quite inept to deny a reality because you cannot grasp how it works; and here the Sceptics, and those who are enormously and foolishly beset by doubt, who maintain either that motion does not exist, or perhaps that they are not affected even by their own body, because they do not know how motion happens and how it affects them, are very imperceptive . . . Impious one and all, they would deprive men of the first and greatest attribute of divinity, namely, ineffability . . . (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 29.]

K [←in margin] Thus, I have now diagnosed my condition. I merely experience the World. I am a spectator of the scene, not an actor. And yet, the World that I observe cannot itself impress on me the likeness under which I observe it. The World impels its likeness towards my body and leaves it there: it is the Divinity that then conveys it from my body into me, and into my mind. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 11.]

L [←in margin] But I cannot get beyond *I do not know*, there is nothing I can add to this *I do not know*. I do not know how I came to this condition . . . What is lacking is the knowledge of how I came to this condition. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 12.]

What is present in this mode of my condition, I do not know; therefore, I am all the more ignorant of what was in the past; for

in the order of reason present things are very clear to us, past things more obscure . . . and things to come very obscure. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 33.]

M [←in margin] And I see that just as I was brought hither, so I can be carried hence, now or in the future, even at this very moment; carried away still ignorant, and not willingly, but more than that (and to my disgrace) against my will. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 13.]

It is remarkable how men wish to fend off not only death itself by every possible means, but even the consciousness of death, and as it were to flee from it and evade it. The following saying vividly depicts the mood of someone who is in such an excitable and distressed state: *I see that I can be taken away, either now or at some other time. . . .* Why do they insert that pointless alternative *either now or at some other time?* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 36.]

They are . . . led by stupidity, and a certain stubbornness in acting, and by the diabolical instigation to persist with something once it has been started (for this is at the instigation of the Devil, as I shall show quite clearly in Treatise IV, in the Section concerned with the Devil). (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 38.]

We learn from the Inspection of Ourselves that we also are subject to sin, in fact subject to the Devil; for he is the instigator who continually inculcates into us this creed: *Continue, because you have begun. . . .* since something should not be continued because you have begun it but because Reason dictates it. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 40.]

N [←in margin] The following is an epitome of what I have learned from the Inspection of Myself . . . :

1. In this world I cannot act on anything outside me.
2. My every Action, insofar as it is mine, remains within me.
3. Owing to divine power, my actions are sometimes diffused outside me.
4. To that extent, they are not my Actions, but God's.
5. They diffuse when, and to what degree it seems fitting to God, in accordance with the laws laid down by His free decision, and

dependent on His will, so that it is no less miraculous when by the power of His will my tongue is made to flap in my mouth as I utter the word 'Earth' than if that same power were to make the Earth shake at the utterance of the same word. The only difference is that it sometimes pleases God to make the former happen, but never the latter.

6. I am but a spectator of the World.

7. Nevertheless, the World itself cannot produce that spectacle for me.

8. God alone can produce that spectacle.

9. And He does so in such an ineffable and incomprehensible manner that among all the stupendous miracles with which God favours me on this scene, I myself, the spectator, am His greatest and most enduring miracle.

10. I can be removed from this scene, that is, I can be expelled from the World: and indeed at this very moment. Yet being in the World for me is only to be a spectator of the same (which, although this belongs to me, I owe to God), and to move certain things in it, that is, certain bodily things (which movement is, however, God's alone, and is only attributed or imputed to me, because it happens in accordance with my will).

11. I fear that expulsion from the World which is called death.

12. Partly because I have become so habituated to corporeal life that it is hard to tear myself away from it, and partly because I have a bad conscience, I know that the account that I have to render of myself is not in my favour. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Paragraph 14.]

Of course, the Earth itself and its motions are no less connected with and dependent on the command of my will than the tongue in my head and its motion. Therefore, the fact that my tongue moves when I will, but the Earth does not, is not up to me, but must be referred to someone else, namely, Him who made both of these clocks, the clock of my will and the clock of the world, and who accordingly willed, and so ordained and established it, that when the clock of my will sounds, the clock of my tongue will also sound, but not also the clock of the Earth. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 48.]

[Those who reduce] man everywhere to the order of nature, and making him the kin of sheep and cattle, are reprehensible; since it has now been made very clear to us by the foregoing Inspection

that man by no means belongs to the natural order, to the world, and to its parts, but that his condition must be referred absolutely to the order of miracles. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 2. Inspection of Oneself. Ann. 51.]

3. *Disregard of Oneself*

The chief axiom of Ethics . . . : *Wherein you have no power, therein neither should you will* (Note that this axiom includes both parts of humility . . . inspection and disregard. *Wherein you have no power*; we read in this the inspection of oneself . . . *Therein you should not will*; we read in this . . . disregard of oneself, or neglect of oneself across the whole human condition, and resigning ourselves into the power of His hand, in which we are, indeed, whether we like it or not. [from Geulincx's note to Annotation 1]) or what comes to the same thing, *Do nothing gratuitously, do nothing in vain*. In practical matters no clearer principle than this can be imagined; no one who would wish to reject it can be anything but extremely stupid, and we customarily call men stupid when we see them doing or attempting something which they could easily see was in vain. Therefore, to will nothing concerning our condition, to leave the whole thing to Him in whose power it really is, this truly is to disregard oneself, this is to build virtue on the unshakeable foundation of humility. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 3. Disregard of Oneself. Ann. 1.]

The second part of Humility is *Disregard of Oneself*. . . . The Disregard consists in the abandonment of myself, altogether relinquishing, transferring, and yielding myself to God, from whom . . . I have my whole being (in coming hither, acting here, and departing hence). I must be led by no regard for myself, I must put away all care and study of myself; and as one who has no right over anything, not even over myself, also claim nothing by right. I must have a mind not for what suits me, but for what God commands, and I must labour not over my own happiness, blessedness, or repose, but over my obligations alone.

4. *First Obligation**The Argument*

The axiom, *Wherein I have no power, therein I do not will*, embraces both parts of Humility: *I have no power* denotes Inspection of Oneself, *I do not will* denotes Disregard of Oneself. But I have no power over death, that is, my departure from the world; I can neither defer nor delay it . . . therefore I shall will nothing here. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to To Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation.]

A [←in margin] *When God summons me from the living, and orders me to return to Him, I must not persist in refusal, but hold myself ready.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

With a truly virtuous man there is no delay when he is summoned by his God. He holds it to be of no importance whether he is to get a beating or not; he has learned that it is a matter not for him, but for his master, and that wherein he has no power, therein neither does he will. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation. Ann. 3.]

B [←in margin] Which of the servants is more gravely delinquent, he who comes unsummoned, or he who does not come when he is summoned?

A multiplicity of sinners does not make sins lighter. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation. Ann. 4.]

When God summons me hence, nothing will stay me. I shall come at once, come with all my heart, come willingly and readily; I shall fly to Him. But contrary to the multitude of naturally savage and violent men, my wings will not be formed by the weariness of life, or the infirmities of man's lot. I shall simply come because God calls me. All He has to do is call; and His call will urge me on with all possible despatch. Will awful terrors assail me? Torments rack me? Ordeals make trial of me? Yes, I shall suffer; but insofar as it is lawful for a man, I resolve that I shall do nothing, or for that matter refuse to do anything, on account of such sufferings. I shall render myself up wholly to God, to whom I owe my entire being. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 4. First Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

5. *Second Obligation**The Argument*

The Second Obligation is, not to depart this life unless God has summoned you. (A)

Indeed, I have been wont to believe that I have power in this; but since I cannot by willpower alone release myself from the body . . . I understand plainly that I was mistaken. (B)

Hence, I firmly hold to this: no affliction will be so great as to lead me to wish to give up my life; no happiness so great as to persuade me to wish to hold on to my life; the decision will rest with the law of God. (C)

This Obligation is practically the foundation for the others: anyone who shakes it overturns the whole of Ethics. (D)

Seneca objects, wanting to be free to depart this life because it is easy to depart, especially if calamity urges departure. (E)

But above all, not only is it is not easy for us, it is impossible. And even though I have to grant that, according to the common way of speaking, it is easy, it does not follow that one should do it. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation.]

A [←in margin] *Not to depart when not summoned, not to quit my post and station of life without orders from the Supreme Commander.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

Even though they understand well enough that they cannot defer death, they nevertheless do not see that they cannot bring forward death; the cause of this inadvertence being that they are persuaded that they can move certain bodies. Hence, they believe that they can bring about death with their own hands, and that therefore all they have to do is will it, and they can die more quickly than they would otherwise die. But it is quite clear from our inspection of the human condition that men move neither their own nor other bodies, and consequently, it is as impossible for us to choose death as to cut short life and bring forward death. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 1.]

It is vain for me to attempt what I cannot undertake, like a ridiculous dwarf aspiring to wrest the club out of the hand of Hercules. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

I am feebler than a dwarf, than any dwarf; God is Hercules; He bears a club, or rather the keys to life and death. Wishing to go on living even at the point of death, I try to wrest the key to life from His hands, thus sinning against my first Obligation. On the edge of desperation, wishing to bring forward death, I try to wrest the key to death from His hands, thus sinning against my second Obligation. In both cases I am stupid and ridiculous; in both cases I will something without having the power. I cannot prolong life, I have no power over it. I grasp the following well enough: that I cannot bring forward death, I have no power over it. So long as I believed that I move myself, I did not grasp this sufficiently, for I believed that I could thrust a dagger into myself, that I could stab myself in the heart. But when I inspected myself I came to understand that this is false. Hence, since I cannot move myself, if I can destroy myself at all my only recourse is for me to destroy myself by willpower alone. But that I cannot separate myself from this body by willpower alone is so clear to me through my consciousness that nothing clearer could be said or represented to me. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 2.]

B [←in margin] I can only will it, and when I will it, God usually imparts the motion that I will; not because I will it, but because He wills that the motion that I will should be imparted. For example, if a baby wants the cradle¹¹ in which he has been laid to be rocked, it is usually rocked; though not because *he* wants it, but because his mother or nursemaid, who is sitting by the cradle and who can actually rock it, also wants to do what he wants. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

The analogy of the baby and his mother on the one hand, and of God and me on the other hand, is a lame one . . . (God makes motion, the mother does not make it; the baby moves his mother to move, I do not move God). But the whole force and energy of the analogy turn on this, that just as the motion or rocking of the cradle is made with the baby willing it, though the motion is not made by the baby, so equally, motion is often made with me willing

¹¹ On Beckett's use of this image in *Murphy*, *Film* and *Rockaby*, see Uhlmann's introduction here. Also see Anthony Uhlmann, *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*, Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2006.

it, though I never make it. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 7.]

The whole nature of sin consists in this alone . . . in the sense of *sic-se-habentia* (as the Scholastics call it): *as much as it lies with me, I resist the Divine will* . . . Thus, as much as it lies with us, we can come unsummoned when we destroy ourselves, but then, absolutely speaking, we come anyway, because God wills us to come. Similarly, as much as it lies with us, we do not come, though summoned, when on the point of death we still wish to live, even if an unexpected remission is granted to us; but in the absolute sense the reason we do not come is that God does not will us to come. And so the whole nature of all sin is summed up in this: *as much as it lies with me, I do otherwise than God wills*; though in the absolute sense I never do otherwise. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 8.]

C [←in margin] Now that I rightly comprehend this Obligation of mine . . . *I shall remain here on God's orders; without His orders I shall not depart. Let all the hatred, etc. . . . of the world befall me . . . let my body be consumed by starvation, scab, and consumption; let fear, pain, tedium, and consciousness of evildoing oppress my spirit; let lethargy, bewilderment, listlessness, and stupidity possess my mind. Yet still I am certain that I should not want to prevent death, or slay myself, but stay calm . . . though my body may be robust, shapely, vigorous, and perfect in every part; my demeanour lofty, secure, and genial, reinforced by the consciousness of acting rightly; my mind acute, shrewd, always nourished and well-stocked with ideas to be investigated and considered . . . none of them will furnish me with a pretext for remaining here.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

I would have thought that fortune can do everything for someone who lives, rather than nothing to him who knows how to die. (**Contra Seneca, Epistle 70**). (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 9.]

I will not preoccupy myself with death even if a certain cruel death is imminent. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 10.]

I will not preoccupy myself with disease or bodily pain. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 11.]

Even if I am sick in mind and spirit, I will still not preoccupy myself with death. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 12.]

D [←in margin] On this second Obligation all the subsequent ones are founded, at least down to the sixth Obligation inclusive. For sustenance must be obtained (the third Obligation) in order to live (the second Obligation); some mode of life must be chosen (the fourth Obligation) in order that sustenance can be had; many things must be done, many things borne (the fifth Obligation) to enable us to be equal to the mode of life that we have assumed; and amongst other things, for the same reason, the mind must now and then be relaxed (the sixth Obligation). You see how in a continuous and unbroken chain the subsequent Obligations are derived from the second, so that if the latter should fail, the former will necessarily at once fall into ruins. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 21.]

E [←in margin] Seneca, in his 70th Epistle, even gives an example of this, where someone who was to be thrown to the wild beasts decided that he had to spill his guts beforehand, and snatching up a sponge that had been placed next to the toilets for wiping the backside, stuffed it down his throat, and so cheated the crowd of their entertainment. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 21.]

You would think you were listening to a warrior, or more accurately, a raider, exulting over slaughter and blood, rather than a philosopher. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 28.]

To these arguments, or rather cries, of Seneca I respond firstly, that while it is not easy for us to depart from our body, so far as our own power and efficacy are concerned, it is wholly impossible . . . secondly, even if it were easy . . . no argument can be adduced from it in favour of this impious doctrine of Seneca . . . it by no means follows that . . . *it is easy, therefore we should do it.* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Ann. 30.]

F [←in margin] Though (**virtuous men**) are kept here, they are perfectly free. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 5. Second Obligation. Paragraph 6.]

6. *Third Obligation*

The Argument

The Third Obligation concerns the need to refresh the body. It arises from the Second Obligation; for if you do not refresh the body, it will fail; which the Second Obligation forbids. (**A**)

A digression respecting the Obligation to procreate, undertaken on account of an analogy with the Third Obligation. (**B**)

Anxiety is banned by the performance of this Obligation; for anxiety has no place in one who seeks only his office and Obligations. For if he cannot fulfil an Obligation, then that Obligation thereby expires, and is superseded by another Obligation. (**C**)

An objection is raised to the Third Obligation on the basis of the Ethical principle, *Wherein you have no power, etc.* For it seems that we have no power over the refreshment of the body either. I reply, that the Ethical principle, *Wherein you have no power, etc.*, does not suffice . . . (**D**) (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation.]

A [←in margin] *To refresh my body*, to eat, to drink, to sleep, and to be moderate in all these things; to await hunger, thirst, and sleep, not summon them, or anticipate them with luxury. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

Hippocrates advises one to rise from the table while still hungry, and likewise to give over drinking while still thirsty, and to give over sleeping and get up while still a little drowsy. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 3.]

Gluttony kills more than the sword. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

B [←in margin] The Obligation *to procreate* also arises from this. In the same way as God has ordered me to remain here as a single individual, he has ordered the human race to remain here as well; and just as I must eat in order to remain, so I must at some time

procreate in order that the human race may remain here. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

C [←in margin] I must remember . . . *to abandon myself, and deliver myself entirely into God's hands.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

Accordingly, when I eat, I shall eat not for myself (having abandoned myself), but that I may live. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 8.]

But without fuss, anxiety or care, at least if I have summoned or fed them myself. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

The Passions are not within our power . . . Thus, disquiet, anxiety, fear, **etc.** . . . are subject to the order of nature, and are outside the scope of morals . . . But to do or not do anything on account of passions (that is, to cite, and maintain them, as reasons) relates wholly to vice. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 10.]

I know that the fact that I have proved that nothing is to be feared will not stop me from fearing: I can advise myself about this, but usually cannot persuade myself of it.

Where there is no *Me*, there also there is no *My*.

When God summons me.

Now that He calls me forth from among the living, calls me to Himself, I must come, and nothing more will remain for me but to come. How He will receive me, I do not trouble myself, as I no longer trouble about myself at all. Whether He will in due course infuse me into another body? Whether He will keep me with Himself, divested of a body? Whether He will receive me at all, as I am evil? Whether He will forgive me, as He is good? Whether He will combine these two in some ineffable way that satisfies at the same time both His Piety and His Justice? [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

When God summons me, they say, I would willingly die, I would willingly obey, and I do not trouble about myself. But what of my wife, who will be a widow? What of my children, who will be fatherless? However, such folk lie brazenly when they say that they do not trouble about themselves; for they trouble about things that are *theirs*, and *theirs* presupposes *themselves*. In this sense, they trouble a great deal about themselves . . . Why do they not trouble about the

widow and fatherless children of anyone else who is dying? Only because here there is no trace of the *self* whom they had found elsewhere, and have loved ever since. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 11.]

To believe (that is, to opine, to conceive and cherish opinions) *is not for the Wise Man* (not for the sage or philosopher), as the well-known saying has it. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 13.]

Here I take to task the insanity of those abject and wretched little men who, considering only their offences, and taking no account of divine compassion, sometimes commit suicide out of desperation, adding to their offences the last and gravest offence of all. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 15.]

I allude to the rashness of those stupid people who remit everything to the Goodness and mercy of God, and forswear God's Justice. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 16.]

I have learned by inspecting myself that the totality of my human condition, comprising birth, life, and death, is a monument to the ineffable wisdom of God. We know *that it exists*; we do not know, in fact, we know that it is not given to us to know, *how it exists*. This we rightly call *ineffable* (as will emerge later, in Treatise II, where I shall speak of Piety), because *we know that it exists, but we do not know how it exists, and we know only this much, that we cannot know . . .* God is ineffable in joining me to a body; how can I know whether He will not equally ineffably join His Justice with His mercy in punishing me and forgiving me? (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 18.]

D [←in margin] I intend to take all precautions against anything that might retard your (**Philaretus**) progress along this royal road to Virtue.

We have no power even to eat and drink, and to do other things that are subject to the Third Obligation.

He ordered us to want . . . those motions that He has deemed necessary for feeding and refreshing the body . . . Hence, the reasoning that established the Second Obligation cannot overturn the Third, which the second necessarily entails. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Paragraph 4.]

This seems to agree with our axiom: *Wherein you have no power, etc.*

God sometimes wills that our will should have some power where it could have had no power of its own . . . our will has no power of its own over eating, it has power on account of God's ordinance.

(a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 6. Third Obligation. Ann. 21.]

7. Fourth Obligation

The Argument

This Obligation involves the following four elements: 1. Choice of mode of life; 2. Devotion to this mode of life; 3. Constancy in this mode of life; 4. The vicissitudes of this mode of life. As to Choice, justice must be served by taking up a mode of life that is neither greater nor less than is required for sustenance.

As to the Dedication . . . it largely depends on the Fifth Obligation.

As to Constancy and Vicissitudes, a brief warning that our mode of life should be changed as little as possible.

An Appendix concerning Anxiety about living, which occurs principally in the choice of mode of life. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation.]

A [←in margin] It *bids me to acquire some skill, to embrace some condition and institution of life, and after I have embraced it, diligently to make room for the offices of that institution; and neither break it off at every opportunity for change, nor (if I should happen to have chosen ill) to cling desperately to it, as though my condition of life and life itself were the same thing.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

They . . . fall into destitution and want of all things . . . who are too ready to alter their mode of life, for they are pursued by that melancholy which is born out of lack of a settled mode of life . . . *Twelve professions, thirteen misfortunes.* (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Ann. 1.]

B [←in margin] A condition of life is to be secured which may suffice to maintain the body in good order . . . There should . . . be only so much of the condition as suffices for sustenance, only so much sustenance as suffices for life, and ultimately only so much life

as God will allow. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

C [←in margin] I must be sure to select a condition of life that not only suffices for me, but to which I suffice and am equal. With body and mind weak, will my wits be worth anything? I shall be a tailor (**Gall!**)¹² [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

D [←in margin] Note . . . that anxiety is of two kinds, namely, *anxiety-that*, and *anxiety-lest*. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Ann. 5.]

Do I suffer rejection? Has the post which Reason impelled me to solicit fallen to a rival? What of that? God ordered me to try, not to succeed . . . *O my soul, if you would obey God, and would do that alone . . . why are you so anxious?* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 7. Fourth Obligation. Paragraph 4.]

8. *Fifth Obligation*

The Argument

To bear many things, to do many things; for sometimes I cannot find a mode of life that is productive and affords me sustenance.

I consider four instances in which difficulties may arise. First, in the mode of life of a learned man (in which study and a thousand

¹² This rare interjection from Beckett seems to take Geulinx to task for having the gall to disparage an honourable profession and the worthy artisans who practice that profession. This brings to mind a joke which Beckett tells twice later in his career, about tailors and God, once in *Endgame*, where Nagg tells the story, and in an essay on the painters Bram and Greer van Velde 'La peinture des van Velde ou le Monde et le Pantalon' (see *Disjecta*, edited by Ruby Cohn). To sum this up: a client goes to a tailor and orders a pair of trousers, and after returning time and again only to be told the trousers are still not ready, the client finally snaps. To quote the punchline from Nagg's telling of the joke in *Endgame*: "God damn you to hell, Sir, no it's indecent, there are limits! In six days, do you hear me, six days, God made the world. Yes sir, no less Sir, the WORLD! And you are not bloody well capable of making me a pair of trousers in three months!" [Tailor's voice, scandalized.] 'But my dear Sir, my dear Sir, look—[disdainful gesture, disgustedly]—at the world—[pause]—and look—[loving gesture, proudly]—at my TROUSERS!" Samuel Beckett, *Endgame*, in *The Complete Dramatic Prose*, London: Faber, 1986, 102–103.

tediums have to be endured, and which is subject to envy and criticism); second, in the mode of life of a magistrate (in which there are nocturnal sessions, cares, and the ingratitude and fury of the vulgar over all these); third, in a humble and downtrodden mode of life (where there is contempt, poverty, and a harsh, daily grind); fourth, in the vicissitudes of one's mode of life (where the strange and the unaccustomed disturb and alarm, afflicting the mind with a thousand anxieties). In the midst of all these the mind has to stay calm. (a) [From Annotations: Argument to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 8. Fifth Obligation.]

I must do many things, suffer many things, either serving faithfully and equably some institution or course of life, or at times changing it, and redirecting the course of my pilgrimage elsewhere, if need be. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 8. Fifth Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

9. Sixth Obligation

A [←in margin] This pendant to the Fifth Obligation consists in the rule that one should *frequently relax the mind, lest it become jaded by incessant business.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

Men . . . ignorant of the nature of Ethics: they do not realise that we are often obliged to do what we are in fact driven to do by instinct and the blind urgency of our passions, and that it is one thing to perform an Obligation and another thing entirely to do what the Obligation says. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Ann. 1.]

Socrates did not disdain to play with children; Cato soothed with wine a spirit vexed by public affairs; and Scipio would move that heroic and martial body of his to musical measures. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

B [←in margin] One should indulge in pleasure only in proportion to the torpor, melancholy, and other things that in the course of our duties entangle us with impediments that have to be overcome. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

C [←in margin] “*Whatever men do, they are all judged by their intention*”
 (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Ann. 9.]

Indeed, Philaretus, the virtuous and the vicious often differ little in their external actions; but their minds differ immensely in their modes of thought. Vicious men indulge themselves in pleasure *for its own sake*; virtuous men *for a reason*; vicious men because *it is their good pleasure*, virtuous men because *God commands it* . . . When a virtuous man indulges in his own pleasure, it is then that he restrains his pleasure the most; for he does not indulge in his pleasure because he likes it (he will rather despise it), but because it is his duty . . . like a merchant voyaging (let us say) to the Indies, who when a storm blows up casts his merchandise into the sea. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

D [←in margin] It matters little if we cannot distinguish between virtuous men and vicious men . . . (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Ann. 11.]

That gloomy ballet, with its sorrowful countenance, wrinkled brow, glaring eyes, and narrow censure of all that is best, is one that masked hypocrites dance to the life today as much as of yore.

In vino veritas. Only a virtuous man, who never hides his true colours, comes out well here.

The virtuous will not act unless they are bidden, but the vicious will act even if they are forbidden; the virtuous have something else in mind, the vicious just that very thing; the virtuous are like passers-by, heading somewhere else, the vicious like residents who want to stay; the virtuous seize pleasure, the vicious are seized by it. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 4.]

These¹³ are the laws that direct my leaving this life and my presence here, and prescribe for me the rules of living and dying. My departure, or death, is governed by these first two Laws: (1) *Not to depart reluctantly when I am called*; (2) *Not to depart at all, unless I am called*. My presence here, or life is governed by the three (or four) remaining Laws: (3) *To refresh my body*; (4) *To pursue some settled course*

¹³ Beckett forgets to mark this as ‘E’ following to his own system of categorization.

of life; (5) *While I am here, to suffer many things, and to do many things;* (6) *Amongst other things, frequently to relax my mind.* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 9. Sixth Obligation. Paragraph 5.]

10. *Seventh Obligation*

A [←in margin] I introduce a division of the Obligations into those concerned with death (such as the first two Obligations), those concerned with life (such as the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth), and those concerned with birth (such as the Seventh Obligation). For every Obligation of man is concerned with either coming hither, being here, or departing hence; in short, with *hither, here, or hence*. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 1.]

To enquire whether there is yet another Law of Humility which governs my coming into this world, that is, *my birth* (for *to be born* is not for me to emerge into the light, but to be joined to a body, and to enter the World, the World in which I already was when I was enclosed in my mother's womb). Is there not, then, some Law of Humility that could govern my *birth*? Clearly, there is, namely, *that I should look upon my birth as a good, never detest it, and never lament it. I must not rage with madness and impotence that I am punished by having been born. I must not revile those who engendered my body; much less* (something that I cannot contemplate without horror) *Him who committed me to my body*, and by so miraculously joining me to it, made it *mine*. I must not number myself with the fools . . . who say: *Not to be born is best; next to this, to die as soon as possible*. On the contrary, it is for the best that I was born, for the best because the Best of Beings wanted it. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 1.]

[Beckett's handwritten notes begin here]

B [←in margin] Yet there is this boundless ocean of miseries, on which I presently toss. I am hurled from one calamity to another, only to sink back as often as not from the latter to the former. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

And when we feel the onset of death, then truly almost unspeakable agonies oppress us, as all those on the verge of death (i.e., sick unto death) know too well. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 6.]

I tremble with mortal dread, I languish with incredible sadness, I am crushed and constricted by intolerable anguish.

My mind gropes in a cloud of *unknowing*, my spirit is beset with *vice*.

An ignorant mind . . . a mind that preferred to go on the trail of alien and superfluous things that are of no concern to me, as a result of which I am alike ignorant of what concerns me and what does not . . . how could I know anything when I do not even know myself and things that concern me?

A depraved spirit, motivated by self-love, rabidly craves all things for itself with insatiable desire, subordinates all things to itself, grasps all things for itself; and wanting to serve even God for its own selfish sake, calls this service *piety*. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 2.]

I now enquire into the causes **of our afflictions**. Three causes are considered: the first of them Platonic, the second, Christian, and the third, coming from an unknown person, though it may be ascribed to the very author of this Treatise. These causes are considered in a tentative manner, inasmuch as to enquire into causes is not the subject-matter of Ethics, whose office can be summed up as: wherein one has no power, therein one should not will; and what one cannot avert, to consider it to be for the best. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 10.]

C [←in margin] Why do so many and such great calamities conspire against me? Have I offended God in some way (**Plato**)? Thrust into a body as if into a prison, am I paying the penalties that I have deserved, and among others this grave one, that I am oblivious of the offence that I am expiating? Someone who is being beaten can at least take comfort in knowing why he is beaten. Did one of my parents, or grandparents, (**Xians**) or perhaps the first man, offend God? Did he devolve that unhappy inheritance upon me and his other descendants . . .? [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

When ruinous gambling is the old man's pleasure, his youthful heir also plays, handling his weapon as if shaking a little dice-box: such is nature's course.

There is no support of this kind for Plato, who says that we have all sinned on our own account before we were cast into the prison-house of our bodies to be punished. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 13.]

But perhaps these are calamities only to complainers and self-interested persons, not to the humble.

I shall not enquire into (**the cause of**) them for the time being, because Humility has not as yet afforded me any guidance on the question. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 3.]

Disregard of oneself, neglect and abandonment of oneself, whereby we leave everything to God, taking no care of ourselves, are the chief source of humility. From this source as such it does not follow that we should enquire into the cause of our afflictions. Either they are afflictions (as they seem to be to the vulgar), or they are not (as wiser heads and some Philosophers have realised). (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 18.]

A brief recapitulation of all the Obligations, and all the propositions that we have examined in the light of those Obligations. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Ann. 22.]

D [←in margin] God . . . I give myself wholly to him. That I was brought into this life (I approve of this because He brought me into it); **(1)** that I am leaving this life (I want to leave when He says so, I do not want to leave if He does not say so) **(2, 3, 4, 5, 6)** that I live this life (I want to live because He has ordered it, I want to labour that I may eat).

Then I shall be worshipping not God but (so to speak) a graven image.

The impatient clatter and drumming [four illegible words added here by Beckett] of my desires. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 10. Seventh Obligation. Paragraph 4.]

11. *The Adminicle of Humility*

A [←in margin] This will be the most excellent Adminicle of Humility, firmly to direct our mind to refer nothing of what we do or do not

do to our Happiness, but everything to our Obligation. . . . Let us forsake these inauspicious standards behind which with such great pomp, such great consent and concourse, so many impediments and burdens of studies and counsels, the human race marches. Day and night they seek Happiness; it is the Palladium for whose capture they compete . . . Nor are they ashamed of such disgraceful service, or rather servitude . . . Their watchword is public, and in the mouths of all: *Let us be happy and prosper!* [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 11. The Adminicle of Humility. Paragraph 1.]

And again, *Let things turn out well! . . . Good morning! Good night!* etc. (a) [From Annotations to Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 11. The Adminicle of Humility. Ann. 1.]

Happiness is like a shadow: it flees from you when you pursue it; but pursues you when you flee from it. But you should be aware that it may not always pursue you when you flee; for if you learn cunning in the ways of Happiness and flee from it in order that it may pursue you, it will not pursue you. To flee from Happiness for such a reason is not to flee from it, but to pursue it. No-one ever attained Happiness by doing something to attain it, certainly not one who craftily flees this Amazon with a view to inducing her in the Parthian manner to pursue him, and by fleeing would capture her as she pursues him, or (what he perhaps thinks more pleasant) to be captured by her. A truly humble mind, having not only submitted to, but immersed itself in its Obligations . . . beyond concern . . . is capable of Happiness. Happily it conceals itself, and happily it is found by that Happiness from which it had so happily concealed itself. It alone flees happily, and happily comes upon that from which it fled. [From Treatise I. Chapter II. Section II. § 11. The Adminicle of Humility. Paragraph 1.]

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